250-Hour Distance-Learning Course on

Classical Yoga

Traditional Yoga Studies

Saskatchewan, Canada

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—Traditional Yoga Studies

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The cover drawing by James Rhea is of Patanjali.

Email: tyslearning@sasktel.net

250-Hour Classical Yoga Distance-Learning Course
Study Schedule

Month 1

Read and complete

1. Introduction: Patanjali's Wisdom for Today
2. Lesson 1 – Studying the Yogic Way
3. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #1 **(do not submit)**

Month 2

Read and complete

1. Lesson 2
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #2 **(do not submit)**

Month 3 and 4

Read and complete

1. Lesson 3
2. "For Reflections" and Suggested Yoga Practice
3. **Complete Questionnaire #3 (please submit this assignment to your tutor)**

Month 5

Read and complete

1. Lesson 4
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #4 **(do not submit)**

Month 6

Read and complete

1. Lesson 5
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #5 **(do not submit)**

Month 7

Read and complete

1. Lesson 6
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #6 **(do not submit)**

Month 8 and 9

Read and complete

1. Lesson 7
2. "For Reflections" and Suggested Yoga Practice
3. **Complete Questionnaire #7 (please submit this assignment to your tutor)**

Month 10

Read and complete

1. Lesson 8
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #8 **(do not submit)**

Month 11

Read and complete

1. Lesson 9
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #9 **(do not submit)**

Month 12

Read and complete

1. Lesson 10
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #10 **(do not submit)**

Month 13 and 14

Read and complete

1. Lesson 11
2. "For Reflections" and Suggested Yoga Practice
3. **Complete Questionnaire #11 (please submit this assignment to your tutor)**

Month 15

Read and complete

1. Lesson 12
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #12 **(do not submit)**

Month 16

Read and complete

1. Lesson 13
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #13 **(do not submit)**

Month 17 and 18

Read and complete

1. Lesson 14
2. "For Reflections" and Suggested Yoga Practice
3. **Complete Questionnaire #14 (please submit this assignment to your tutor)**

Month 19

Read and complete

1. Lesson 15
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #15 **(do not submit)**

Month 20

Read and complete

1. Lesson 16
2. "For Reflections", Suggested Yoga Practice and Questionnaire #16 **(do not submit)**
3. **Contact course tutor about your Essay #1 topic**

Month 21, 22 and 23

1. **Research and begin writing Essay #1 and #2**

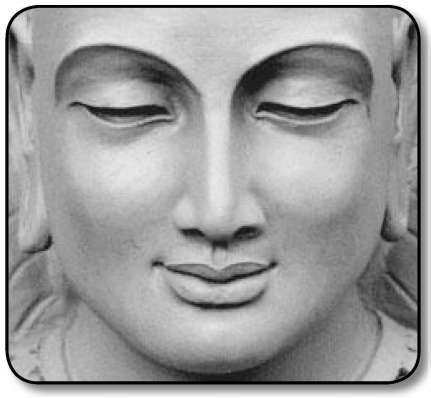
Month 24

1. **Submit Essay #1 and #2 to your tutor**

Introduction
Patanjali's Wisdom for Today

This distance-learning course has two major goals:

- **to decode the knowledge and wisdom contained in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra***
- **to show the practical relevance of Patanjali's teachings**



Whether or not you are a practitioner of Yoga and whether or not you are a Yoga teacher, this distance-learning course is designed to help you comprehend the core teachings of one of the most important Yoga scriptures—the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patanjali—and at the same time support whatever spiritual practice you may be engaged in.

If you happen to aspire to become a Yoga teacher, the materials in this course easily meet the requirements of any existing teacher training program. If you already are a Yoga teacher, then this course will undoubtedly give you a solid background in Classical Yoga to be able to teach this branch of Yoga competently to your students. (Please remember, though, that these materials are copyrighted and are not to be given as handouts or published on the Internet!)

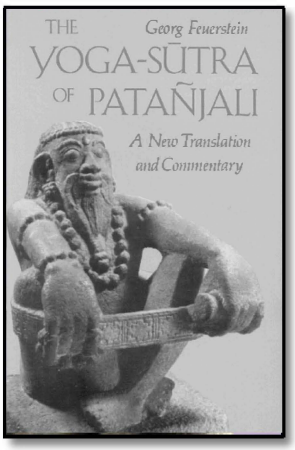
If you are not at present actively practicing a spiritual discipline, I hope that after working through this course, you will feel moved to do so. Yoga can only demonstrate its effectiveness when you apply its principles and techniques in your life. To be sure, studying itself is a very worthwhile undertaking, as it can still open the mind to aspects of existence that hitherto might have escaped its notice.

The course materials include practical exercises, and I can only encourage you to try them out.

If nothing else, you will see how your own mind behaves vis-à-vis the various challenges contained in the practical exercises.

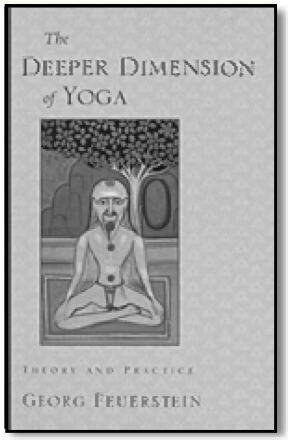
To learn is to grow.
To grow is to transcend.
To transcend is to become free.
To be free is bliss.

The course materials are organized in a simple fashion. They cover sixteen major topics in as many lessons. Each lesson includes several mini-essays of varying length, a suggested Yoga practice (such as the Corpse Posture), questions for reflection (which have a decisively practical slant), further reading, and a questionnaire. There also are **two essays** to be submitted at the end of the course.

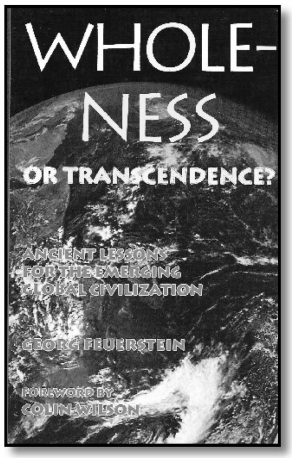


Moreover, each lesson features one or more aphorisms taken from the *Yoga-Sūtra*, which relate to the topics discussed in the lesson. The course covers each and every aphorism (*sūtra*) and comes with my revised rendering.

REQUIRED READING: Reading my translation of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* published by Inner Traditions International, is one of the course requirements. My commentary accompanying the English rendering of each *sūtra* must be considered along with my discussions in this course. Also, many of the essays found in my book *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga,* published by Shambhala Publications, are required reading. In addition, the reading assignments include chapters from my book *Wholeness or Transcendence?,* published by Larson Publications. You, therefore, need to have all three books handy for your studies.



SUGGESTED YOGA PRACTICE: I have selected practices that relate to the topic of a lesson and that anyone can do. They do not require you to be especially clever or physically fit (though do heed my caveats for some suggested practices). The descriptions of the selected practices are as detailed and careful as I could make them, and the practices themselves are what I call *fundamental* practices. They are nonsectarian and do not call for a particular set of beliefs. Few of them derive directly from the *Yoga-Sūtra,* which is more concerned with general principles, but all of them can be said to support your study of this key scripture.



"FOR REFLECTION" QUESTIONS: There are ten or so questions in this category, which are intended to lead you to deeper self-knowledge in terms of your study (and practice) of Yoga. These are not required homework, but I *strongly* recommend that you pay adequate attention to them. As one student said about our 800-hour distance-learning course on the history, literature, philosophy, and practice of Yoga, which also includes this type of question, "they alone are worth the course fee."

FURTHER READING: The publications recommended in this category, again, are *not* required reading, but they may prove helpful in your further studies.

QUESTIONNAIRE: Each of the 16 questionnaires includes about 10 questions. Some are multiple-choice questions, some require you to respond in one word, a sentence, or several sentences. You need to **submit only 4 questionnaires** (those found in Lessons 3, 7, 11, and 14). Which questionnaire answers need to be submitted and which need not is clearly stated at the top of each questionnaire. You are, however, expected to respond to *all* questionnaires, as they will test how much of the material you have been able to assimilate. The key provided at the end of the manual will allow you to check whether your responses have been correct.

HOMEWORK: There is homework to be done for each of the **16 Lessons**. The assignments include responding to questionnaires and doing practical exercises. If you do not intend to receive a certificate, homework is optional.

ESSAYS: This distance-learning course includes only two essays, both of which you are asked to submit toward the end of your studies. The topic of Essay 1 (4,000 words) can concern any aspect of Classical Yoga, which you may choose **after consulting with your tutor.** I am not looking for vast learning, stylistic elegance, or even correct grammar (though I'd appreciate it and you should always make good use of your computer's spell-checking program). The topic of Essay 2 (1500 words) relates to your experience with this course and how you have benefited (or not) from it. The purpose of this particular assignment is to give me a sense of *how* you have made use of the materials in the course, while the purpose of Essay 1 is to gauge *to what degree* you have assimilated the concepts and understood Classical Yoga. By the way, in regard to Essay 2, we are not fishing for compliments! **Both Essays are due at the end of the course and should not be submitted before then.**

Please do not quote materials from others without acknowledging the requisite source. (Plagiarism is completely unacceptable, and students will be disqualified for it.) When citing references, please state the name of the author, article or book title, as well as place and year of publication, and page number if applicable.)

Successful students will be issued a **certificate of completion.**

This distance-learning course calls for roughly 250 hours of studying and practicing, if both are done in an unhurried, thoughtful yogic manner. **If you study only 3 hours per week, you should easily be able to complete this course within two years.** However, you may apply for an extension of 6 months if needed. (The extension fee is $75.00.) But however fast you are studying, you may *not* complete the course in less than one year! Thus it makes no sense to want to rush through the course, even if you already possess a good knowledge of Yoga theory. The practical assignments do take time, and so does the maturation process that is triggered or promoted through these assignments and your studies in general. **If I am unsure of a student's assimilation of the course materials, I may ask to see one or more of his or her responses to nonsubmittable questionnaires.**

All submissions must be made by email to: *tyslearning@sasktel.net*

Please always include your name and email address on the first page of all your communications with us.

It remains for me to wish you good motivation and good concentration, so that your efforts on this course will bring you all the marvelous benefits of *svādhyāya,* or yogic study, promised in the Sanskrit literature: good health, wisdom, and illumination.

Namas te

Georg Feuerstein

I discovered the *Yoga-Sūtra* in 1963 and have been studying this important scripture on and off ever since, along with numerous other Sanskrit texts. Patanjali's work has been a great inspiration to me, mainly because it offers the most systematic map of Yoga within the vast orbit of Hinduism. (I have other favorites within Buddhism and Jainism.) Once a student has grasped the framework of Yoga, as depicted by Patanjali, he or she can more readily comprehend other branches and schools of Yoga. Thus, it makes sense to learn Patanjali's system thoroughly.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* was also my first introduction to the magnificent Sanskrit language in which most Yoga scriptures are written. The advantage of Patanjali's text is that, being a *Sūtra,* it holds few grammatical challenges. Having come to appreciate that many students of Classical Yoga are curious about the language in which Patanjali communicated his ideas, I have given a certain amount of space to linguistic matters when offering my new translation of the *Yoga-Sūtra*. Perhaps you will pick up enough grammatical knowledge to feel moved to actually study Sanskrit. If you have no particular interest in Sanskrit, you can simply ignore my technical notes and key terms given in the *deva-nāgarī* script. You will find this distance-learning course packed with plenty of other fascinating matters.

Since Yoga is a theory-practice continuum, I have naturally paid a great deal of attention to practical details. In the field of Yoga, intellectual understanding is significant but bears true fruit only when we convert it into daily practice. I cannot encourage you enough to really engage the practical assignments and also delve into the "For Reflection" questions, which undoubtedly will promote your self-understanding and, as many other distance-learning students have assured me, spiritual growth.

Lesson 1
Studying the Yogic Way

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To get started on the course in a yogic manner and to appreciate Yoga as a powerful continuum of theory and practice*

- Good Beginnings
- Transliteration and Pronunciation of Sanskrit Terms
- Why Is Study So Important?
- How to Study: Some Practical Hints
- The Meaning of "Yoga"
- Yoga: A Theory and Practice Continuum
- Philosophy
- Posture Practice
- Suggested Yoga Practice: The Corpse Posture
- Further Reading
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 1

GOOD BEGINNINGS

In his *Republic,* Plato states: "The beginning is the most important part of any work." Beginnings set the stage for what follows. It is therefore desirable to cultivate good beginnings in all things. This is an aspect of mindfulness (*smriti*), which is a core attitude in Yoga.

One way to honor and augment our awareness of a new beginning like starting this distance-learning course is to say a prayer or make an affirmation. Prayers or mindful affirmations engender in us a respectful state of mind. In Yoga, we aim to instill this kind of conscious attitude into all our activities throughout the day.

So it behooves us to start any session of yogic study (called *svādhyāya*)—be it reading or performing meditative exercises—with a prayer or, if you prefer, *conscious intention,* like the following:

> May my mind be clear.
> May my heart be open.
> May I be grateful for the teachings of the sages.
> May this study prove liberating.

Or you might use the following traditional prayer ("conscious intention") in English and/or Sanskrit:

> From the unreal lead me to the Real.
> From death lead me to Immortality.
> From darkness lead me to Light.
> Om. Peace. Peace. Peace.

Here is the prayer in Sanskrit:

> *asato mā sad gamaya*
> *mrityor mā amritam gamaya*
> *tamaso mā jyotir gamaya*
> *om shānti shānti shāntih*

The above words have the following meanings:

asato (*asatah*): ablative of *asat* ("nonexistence")
mā ("me"): accusative of first person pronoun ("I", *aham*)
sad: accusative of *sat* ("existence"); the *d* in *sad* is required for euphonic reasons
gamaya: causative of the root *gam* ("to go"), lit. "cause us to go to"
mrityor (*mrityoh*): ablative of *mrityu* ("death")
amritam: accusative of *amrita* ("immortal/immortality")

tamaso (*tamasah*): ablative of *tamas* ("darkness")
jyotir (*jyotih*): accusative of *jyotis* ("light")
shāntih: nominative of *shānti* ("peace")

That which is true existence (i.e., ultimately real), luminous, and immortal is none other than the highest aspect of our being: the transcendental Self (*parama-ātman*), or what Patanjali calls *purusha,* Spirit. In the philosophical system of Vedanta, which is a metaphysical nondualism, this ultimate Reality is also known as *brahman*. This Sanskrit word suggests infinite expansiveness.

At this point, please pause for a few minutes and reflect on the above before proceeding. Don't rush through the course! Make your studying a yogic practice.

TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT

Sanskrit has some sounds/letters that require special diacritical signs for their accurate reproduction in English. In this course, a simplified transliteration of Sanskrit is used. Only the long vowel sounds *ā, ī, and ū* are indicated by macrons (the dash above the letter *a, i, u*). All vowel sounds are open and prounced as in Italian. The consonants *ṣ* and *ś* are both transliterated as *sh.* The palatal *ñ* (as in the name Patañjali) is given as a straightforward *n.* The cerebral sounds, which in academic transliteration require a dot under the letter (e.g., *ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh,* and *ṇ*), are not specially indicated. Neither is the guttaral *ṅ* sound. The *ṛ* sound is given as *ri;* thus *prakriti* instead of *prakṛti.*

Please note that the standard academic transliteration is used in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.* So, don't be surprised about differences in spelling! The sounds *kh, gh, ch, jh, th, dh* are all prounced as aspirated sounds; e.g., *ink-horn, log-house,* etc. In other words, a Sanskrit *th* is definitely **not** prounounced like the English *th* as in *thing*! Thus, the word *hatha* in *hatha-yoga* is pronounced *hat-ha* (HUT-HUH). You should be able to hear the *h* sound. Finally the curious sound *ḥ* (called *visarga*), which is often found at the end of words, is here transliterated and pronounced like *h* but with an echo of the preceding vowel sound. For instance, *yogah* = *yogah*^{a}*; yogaih = yogaih*^{ai}.

1.1: ATHA YOGA-ANUSHĀSANAM

"Now [commences] the exposition of Yoga."

We can glean two things from this opening aphorism in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra.*

First, Patanjali did not launch Yoga as a novel tradition but merely expounded on existing teachings. His system came to be known as *yoga-darshana* ("Viewpoint of Yoga"), *rāja-yoga* ("Royal Yoga), and Classical Yoga. Yoga is in fact a very old tradition stretching back perhaps to 3,000 B.C. I have mapped the history of Yoga quite extensively in *The Yoga Tradition,* and you will be asked to read up a little bit about it in Lesson 2.

Second, Patanjali—like other compilers of philosophical aphorisms (*sūtra*)—highlights the importance of this initial aphorism by starting his whole work with the word *atha* ("now"). It is like a school bell alerting the student to become mindful or attentive. ATHA! The lesson has started!

atha

■ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.1 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

"No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en;
In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

—William Shakespeare

WHY IS STUDY IMPORTANT?

Practitioners and scholars have been writing about Yoga for several thousand years. As you can imagine, the body of literature on the subject is enormous. There are literally thousands of Yoga texts in Sanskrit, Tamil, and other Indic languages. Much has been lost, and manuscripts written on palm leafs or other material continue to decay under the onslaught of India's climate.

The beginning student interested in learning something more about Yoga's glorious past and its philosophical underpinnings is often daunted by the sheer number of books available. It doesn't seem possible to plow through so many tomes in one lifetime, especially when many are written in a scholarly or technical vein or in language that is highly symbolic—what the *yogins* aptly call "twilight language" (*sandhyā-bhāshā*). It is therefore quite natural to wonder, "Is the study of Yoga really worth all the trouble?" After all, the *yogins* have always been down-to-earth folk who emphasize action, or actual spiritual practice (*sādhana*), over philosophizing and abstraction. Indeed, the teacher Sv□tm□r□ma, author of the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*, warned that "those who speak of spiritual knowledge"—and by implication don't get down to

the nitty-gritty of practice—"are only indulging in boastful and false tales" (4.114). Yet, he made this comment in writing in a manual that was to be studied by his students and others. All *yogins* are, however, agreed that we must not merely read Yoga books but apply their wisdom in our everyday life.

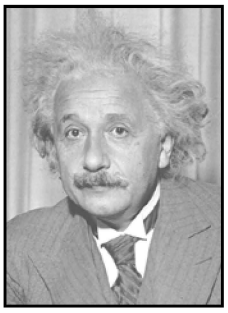
Study is clearly an important part of the learning and growing process in Yoga. One of Patanjali's "restraints" (*niyama*) and also one of the three elements of his "Yoga of Action" (*kriyā-yoga*), which is described in *Yoga-Sūtra* 2.1-2, is called "self-study" (*svādhyāya*, literally "going into one's own). This traditional practice of self-study, while it encourages a contemplative "going into" our own motivations and behavior, also obliges us to study significant Yoga scriptures and contemplate their relevance to our own situation.

Study can be said to serve three purposes. First of all, it provides us with a general historical and philosophical context for our spiritual practice (*sādhana*). Through it we can discover the many insights Yoga adepts have had about themselves and the world. Secondly, study provides us with a kind of "map" for "going into" our own personal practice, which points us in the right direction, warns us about possible pitfalls on the road ahead, and, most importantly, suggests where to look for a helping hand when the going gets tough, as it inevitably will. And finally, study keeps our *sādhana* fresh by suggesting new possibilities and directions if and when our current practices have outlived their usefulness.

◘ Now read Essay #35 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

Never regard study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs.

—Albert Einstein



Study is not mere intellectualism. We study not just out of curiosity or to acquire knowledge because it is supposed to give us leverage over others. Rather, yogic study is spiritual practice, a virtuous activity that gives us insight into the nature of things and into our own character, whereby we can adjust our attitude and lifestyle accordingly. Some religious traditions dismiss study as superfluous and even dangerous, but this is so only because they have much to fear from a mind that is not hemmed in by doctrines. Genuine spiritual traditions welcome what in Latin is called *studiositas,* or appropriate studiousness through which we get to know the teachings free from personal distortions.

"Natural abilities are like natural plants;
they need pruning by study."

—Francis Bacon

HOW TO STUDY: SOME PRACTICAL HINTS

1. Make sure you have the right kind of place for your studies.

Traditionally, Yoga practitioners are advised to seek out the right place (*desha*) for their practice, so that they can succeed in their efforts without disharmony or outside interference. Likewise, your study place should be available to you whenever you want to study; it should be free from distractions, well lit, and spacious enough to accommodate all your study materials.

2. Make sure that you study when and where you will not be interrupted.

If need be, hang a "Do not disturb!" sign on the door, and don't forget to take the telephone off the hook. Naturally, don't listen to music or a radio or TV program while studying. Ask your family or housemates to keep the noise down.

3. Be organized and systematic in your study.

Use sticky notes when reading, keep notes, and regularly review what you have learned to assimilate new information more readily. Read slowly and carefully. Periodically summarize what you have read in your own words. If you are not entirely sure you have understood something, stop and work through the relevant materials once more. If you are not quite sure about the meaning of a word, look it up in a dictionary before proceeding. At the end of a lesson, review the main points.

4. Proceed slowly and deliberately. Don't speed read or speed think!

**It's all a matter of attention, or mindfulness,
which lies at the core of the yogic work.**

THE MEANING OF "YOGA"

The word *yoga* in the *deva-nāgarī* script

Have you used the word "join" lately, or "adjust," "jugular," or "injunction"? You probably didn't realize that these English words, along with a dozen or so others, are distantly related cousins to the Sanskrit word *yoga*.

Yoga is a very malleable word with a host of possible English translations—the Sanskrit-English dictionary lists several dozen—but only two will concern us in this course. The first is "to yoke" or "to unite," which is probably the better known of the pair, from which we get the common rendition of *yoga* into our language as "union."

This word suggests a *unification*, or *integration,* which happens at various levels:

- inner and outer environment
- left and right brain
- body and mind
- higher mind (*buddhi*) and lower mind (*manas*)

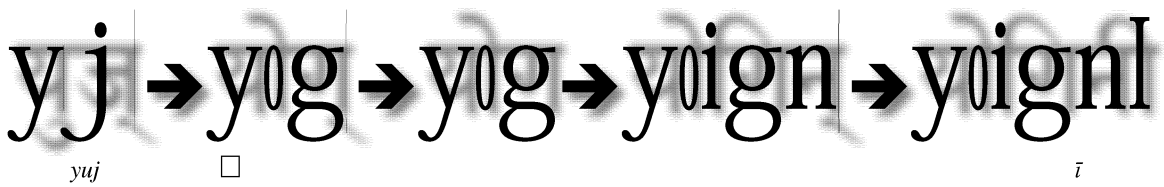
The fruit of this extensive process of unification, or integration, is the discovery of the ultimate Unity, which is the **Singularity of Pure Awareness** (*citi*), the transcendental Spirit. In Patanjali's Classical Yoga, this Ultimate is called *purusha*.

What is less well known is that the term *yoga* also signifies "application" or "endeavor," in the sense of "putting into action" or devoting your efforts to some particular end—in other words, "discipline."

Thus Yoga can be said to be the *discipline of inner unification,* or the *unifying discipline.*

The term *yoga*, moreover, not only indicates the goal of transcendental Unity (as Spirit) but also the practical means of striving toward that goal (but, as we will see below, these means differ from one branch of Yoga to another).

☐ Now read Essays #1–4 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*



> No theory is good unless it permits, not rest, but the greatest work. No theory is good except on condition that one use it to go on beyond.
>
> —**André Gide**, French author

YOGA: A THEORY AND PRACTICE CONTINUUM

Theory can be defined as the systematic interpretation of a body of knowledge. *Practice,* broadly speaking, stands for the application of knowledge in life. In Sanskrit, the word for practice in general is *abhyāsa,* which significantly has the primary meaning of "repetition."

Yoga is based on a comprehensive theory about existence and how we are to relate to it—or what we otherwise call *philosophy.* At the same time, it includes means or methods of applying that theory, or philosophy, to life. The Western Yoga "movement" focuses on (a narrow bandwidth) of the practicalities of Yoga, namely posture practice or the *āsanas.* Generally speaking, however, it fails to include in its program the deeper philosophical and spiritual principles of Yoga. Western Yoga thus tends to be a *truncated* Yoga, which misses the point. The problem is that Western Yoga teachers and their students seldom bother to acquaint themselves with the theoretical principles behind the practices they have adopted.

The purpose of this distance-learning course is to supply the missing link—Yoga philosophy—and to approach Yoga as a *continuum* of theory and practice. What this means in practical terms is that we will encourage you to not only use your brain to assimilate yogic knowledge and wisdom but also to integrate in daily life whatever insights you may glean from your studies. Without this open channel between intellectual understanding and practical application, it seems difficult if not impossible to grow inwardly. Some Yoga "enthusiasts" are just that: They love to read, hear, and talk about Yoga, but they never apply any of its wisdom to the many life situations where wisdom would do them much good. Swami Gitananda of Ananda Ashram used to call them "armchair yogis."

Then there are those who are so busy "doing" Yoga that they don't ever stop to reflect on what it is they are actually doing and whether it makes any sense in the long run. They become experts in posture practice or, more rarely, breath control and win the envy or admiration of others. But seldom do they ask themselves in what way their particular expertise serves their spiritual growth. In some cases, including several famous so-called Yoga teachers, they even dismiss the spiritual dimension of Yoga and life altogether.

In this distance-learning course, we are interested in *traditional Yoga*, which inevitably means Yoga as a spiritual path.

Would you set out to repair your TV set if it stopped working properly without first reading up on TV repairs? Or would you attempt to build yourself a violin if you wanted to play a beautiful instrument

without first understanding all the necessary principles of selecting, shaping, and varnishing the right wood and learning about music theory? Surely not. Yet, every day, people start practicing some aspect of Yoga—be it postures or meditation—without first having acquired some background knowledge or at least a basic understanding of the spiritual process. Nor surprisingly, few ever take the next step. They might even conclude, after meeting the first hurdle or experiencing the first misstep—that Yoga "doesn't work" or that it is not for them.

Since you have enrolled in this course, all this is a bit like preaching to the converted. You do have an appreciation that *theory* is important. I trust that you also have an appreciation of the importance of *practice*. "Practice," as the proverb says, "makes perfect." Well, in the case of Yoga, this is an obvious truth. Through steady and correct Yoga practice, the traditional Sanskrit texts tell us, we can succeed in realizing our true nature, the transcendental Spirit, which is variously called *purusha, ātman*, *cit,* or *citi*.

Practice puts flesh on the abstract bones of theory. As Mark Twain said: "How empty is theory in the presence of fact!" **We can gather the facts—the actual experiences of Yoga—by practicing.** The study of yogic theory, or philosophy, gives us the appropriate context in which the yogic methods and experiences become meaningful.

Stop for a moment and check whether you have assimilated all the important points made here before going on.

PHILOSOPHY

The Sanskrit language does not have an equivalent for our word "philosophy," which we borrowed from the Greek language where it literally means "the love (*philia*) of wisdom (*sophos*)." Instead, the Sanskrit pundits often use the term *darshana,* which means literally "viewing." That is to say, *darshana* stands for what we would call "worldview," a comprehensive take on reality. Thus Patanjali's school of thought is known as *yoga-darshana,* or *the* viewpoint of Yoga. Of course, Patanjali's perspective on Yoga is only one of many. In fact, those Yoga schools that favor one or the other type of metaphysical nondualism are the overriding majority, and his dualistic orientation has always been regarded with some unease by orthodox Hindu philosophers.

1.12: ABHYĀSA-VAIRĀGYĀBHY□M TAN NIRODHAH
"The control [of the fluctuations of the mind] [is achieved] through practice and dispassion."

1.13: TATRA STHITAU YATNO'BHYĀSAH
"Practice is the exertion [in gaining] stability in that [state of mental control]."

1.14: SA TU DĪRGHA-KĀLA-NAIRANTARYA-SATKĀRA-□SEVITO DRIDHA-BHŪMIH
"But this [practice] is firmly grounded [only after it has been] cultivated properly and for a long time uninterruptedly."

The above are especially important aphorisms. They focus on the nature of practice (*abhyāsa*). We learn the following from them:

1. To succeed in Yoga, that is, to achieve complete control over our mind, we must combine the practice of particular techniques with inner renunciation, or what Patanjali calls "dispassion" (*vairāgya*). It is not enough to practice this or that battery of techniques, however diligently we may be in this practice.

2. Momentary control of the mind is not enough. Only through a sustained effort (*yatna*) in controlling the mind will we be able to discover what lies beneath or beyond it, which is our true, transcendental Identity, Spirit or *purusha.*

3. In order to succeed, we must apply ourselves to spiritual practice (a) uninterruptedly, that is continuously or steadfastly, (b) in the correct manner (c) over a long span of time. In other words, we must abandon the inveterate Western idea of instant gratification and be willing to work hard and long. Proper cultivation of Yoga, of course, implies that we find out what the "right way" (*satkāra*) of practicing is. That is, *we must study.*

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.12–14 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Grammatically, the *tad* in aphorism 1.12 must be changed to *tan* because of the following *n* sound. In 1.13, *yatnah* becomes *yatno* owing to the following *a* sound of *abhyāsa,* with the *a* being elided (omitted), which is indicated by an apostrophe (').

- Next read Essay #23 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

- Next read "Practice and Dispassion," (pp. 44–47) in *Wholeness or Transcendence?.*

The important concept of *nirodha* ("control") is explained in Lesson 2!

POSTURE PRACTICE

One of the key practices of Yoga is posture (*āsana*), which is the third limb (*anga*) of Patanjali's eight-limbed path (discussed in Lesson 6). Usually, in Western Yoga circles, practice starts (and often ends) with this this limb. We do not support this orientation, and the only reason for mentioning posture before explaining the moral disciplines (the first and second limbs of the eightfold path) is to provide a context for the practical exercise (relaxation) given in this first Lesson.

Posture can refer to meditation posture, which appears to have been Patanjali's intent, or any of the numerous postures used in Hatha-Yoga for disciplining the body and making it strong and healthy in order to withstand the challenges of higher spiritual practice. Be assured, we will cover the moral disciplines in this course! (See Lesson 7.)

2.46: STHĪRA-SUKHAM ĀSANAM
"The posture [should be] steady and easeful*."

2.47: PRAYATNA-SHAITHILYA-ANANTA-SAMĀPATTIBHYĀM
"[It is accompanied] by the relaxation of tension and coinciding with the infinite [space of consciousness]."

2.48: TATO DVANDVA-ANABHIGHĀTAH
"Thence [results] unassailability by the pairs-of-opposites."

The above aphorisms are explained in the discussion of the Corpse Posture below.

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.46–48 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In 2.48, the word *anabhighātah* is wrongly given as *anabhighātāh* in my book. It should indeed be in the singular.

*Please note that when I wrote my book *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*, I still translated *sukha* as "comfortable," but "easeful" now seems to me to be a more appropriate rendering. Such refinements are always possible, and there is no final word when it comes to translating philosophical Sanskrit texts into another language. I have made similar changes in subsequent aphorisms, which I will indicate in each case.

The greatest Yoga posture is to stand firm in Awareness.

Suggested Yoga Practice

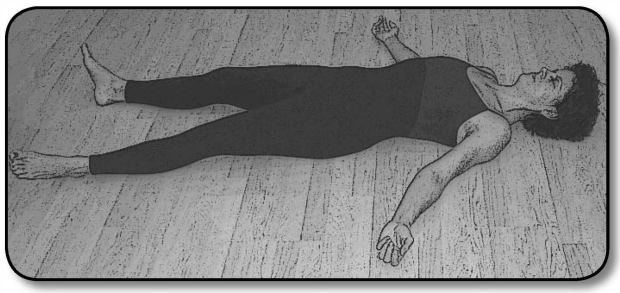
THE CORPSE POSTURE

It seems very appropriate to include the practice of the so-called Corpse Posture right in Lesson 1, and for two reasons:

1. Studying without proper relaxation only contributes to stress rather than relieves it.

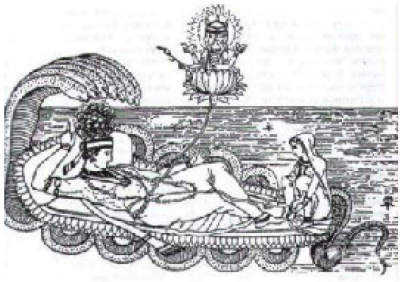
2. The Corpse Posture is symbolic of the inner, mental letting-go (read: renunciation) that is fundamental to all Yoga practice.

Most of us Westerners don't like to think or talk about dying and death. This is something of a taboo subject. Some teachers actually call this posture by a different name, trying to avoid what they feel are unpleasant associations. Eastern teachers are not so squeamish; they understand that life and death belong together like revolving doors. Certainly the *yogins* or *yoginīs* do not fear death. Rather they think of it as an opportunity for further and more intense spiritual practice. Because the moment of death is traditionally considered vitally important, they remain mindful of it throughout life.



The Corpse Posture will afford you the wonderful opportunity to step up the work of self-transformation by letting go a little bit at least of your tight hold on the physical body. The posture really is a symbolic gesture of conscious dying—the all-important attitude that will stand us in good stead when we finally encounter the big moment of having to leave everything behind.

The Corpse Posture is a relaxation exercise, which usually comes at the conclusion of a session of Hatha-Yoga practice, though some teachers use it as a way station *between* postures as well. You might also want to spend a few minutes in this posture of repose before starting your study session. It not only relaxes but also vitalizes the body. Once you have come to enjoy "doing nothing" and "just lying there," you will want to expand your time in the Corpse Posture from 5 to 30 minutes, and more.



God Vishnu reclining on the cosmic serpent Ananta (also called Shesha)

COINCIDING WITH THE ENDLESS

pyTnxiqLy

prayatna-shaithila

To be successful in the Corpse Posture (and in Yoga as a whole) you need, first of all, to cultivate an attitude of dispassion (*vairāgya*), of letting go. Also, you must ensure that the posture is stable (*sthīra*) and easeful (*sukha*). These two, according to *Yoga-Sūtra* 2.46, are essential requirements for *any* posture (*āsana*). In aphorism 2.47, Patanjali mentions a "relaxation of effort" (*prayatna-shaithilya*), that is, a loosening of all physical and psychological tension, which dissolves the normally perceived boundaries of the body-mind. In the same aphorism he speaks of one's "coinciding" (*samāpatti*) with the infinite or "endless" (*ananta*). Some translators have taken the word *ananta* to refer to the cosmic serpent Ananta (also called Shesha), which in Hindu mythology is said to encircle the universe and of whom Patanjali is considered to be an incarnation. The cosmic serpent serves as God Vishnu's couch (see image above).

This is exactly how a successful Corpse Posture feels from the inside: You are so relaxed that your consciousness seems to stretch out beyond the skin and pervades the entire universe. Often the word *sukha* in this context is translated as "comfortable." But there is a big difference between being comfortable and being easeful. "Comfort" recalls the semiconscious attitude of someone sprawled out on a sofa "like a vegetable." This is not what Patanjali had in mind. *Sukha* implies yogic mindfulness and alertness. Thus, "easeful" seems a much better word to convey the meaning of the Sanskrit term. It denotes both a positive state of the body and a positive mood of the mind. So, the Corpse Posture is something of a misnomer, because a corpse doesn't of course have any mindfulness or alertness left. At the same time, this alertness is not connected with any tension in the body or the mind. In this sense, the image of a limp corpse—prior to rigor mortis, which then lasts for about 72 hours—is appropriate enough.

The Corpse Posture can be a first step in the direction of overcoming suffering (*duhkha*)—the unease that embodied beings tend to feel when they are out of touch with their true nature, Spirit.

> *Āsana* is a window that opens onto some of our deepest personal conditioning and the suffering it generates.
>
> —Chip Hartranft, *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali,* p. 38

◘ Now read Essay #51 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

> Lying stretched out on the back like a corpse is called *shava-āsana.*With this *asana* tiredness caused by other *āsanas* is eliminated; it also promotes calmness of mind.
>
> —***Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*** 1.32

PRACTICING THE CORPSE POSTURE

Here are the steps you need to take to practice *shava-āsana* successfully. Pay attention to each detail. Refresh your memory periodically to ensure you practice each step correctly and completely.

1. PREPARING FOR THE CORPSE POSTURE

Use folded blanket or sticky mat to soften the floor (don't practice in bed!). Make sure your body will be warm and, if necessary, cover yourself with a blanket. Always lie parallel and perpendicular to the walls. Don't forget to take off your eye-glasses if you are wearing any.

2. ENTERING THE CORPSE POSTURE

Lie on your back with legs stretched out and heels a few inches apart. Check that you are lying straight and your head is not tilted. Then "soften" your legs and groins, so that your legs and feet turn out. If you tend to suffer from back pain or feel uncomfortable tension in your back, move your heels a foot or two apart or place a rolled-up blanket for support under your knees.

If your shoulders or neck muscles are tight, place your head on another folded blanket.

Place your arms somewhere between 30 and 45 degrees relative to the sides of your torso, with the backs of your hands on the floor. **It is important, however, not to force anything, as this will merely create tension in your body, which makes deep relaxation impossible.**

3. SCANNING AND RELEASING

Now systematically scan your body for tension, beginning with your head. "Soften" your closed eyes, ears, tongue, and nose. Release all tension from the back of the forehead, back of the head, and chin.

Next let your brain "melt" inside the skull. Then feel every part of the body, one by one, and consciously release any tension you might find. Finally, feel your body as a whole and scan for any remaining pockets of tension.

4. RELEASING THE WHOLE BODY THROUGH THE BREATH

Start to pay attention to your breathing, which, as you scan the body and release tension, will gradually deepen and slow down. Visualize all tension leaving your body with each exhalation. But allow

the breath to arise naturally. The body knows how to breathe, and you don't need to force either inhalation or exhalation. With every inhalation, feel the whole body; with every exhalation picture stress exiting it.

5. ENJOYMENT PHASE

Notice how the body is relaxing more and more, but don't succumb to the temptation to fall asleep. This is a normal reaction whenever we lie down to rest, because we have done this many times when going to sleep at night or taking a catnap. But the Corpse Posture requires you to remain conscious. Then you will discover, bit by bit, the wonderful state of deep relaxation in which you remain mindfully aware without, however, having your mind race and your body contract. Just enjoy the inner quiet. When your mind becomes drowsy, refocus your attention on the breath. Keep surveying the body for tension and keep telling it to relax more and more deeply.

6. EXITING THE CORPSE POSTURE

End the Corpse Posture slowly. Don't open your eyes immediately. First gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Gradually make your movements larger—stretch your hands and feet, then arms and legs, then torso and neck. But be sure to do all this slowly. When you have stretched as much as you like, exhale and, while bending your knees, roll over to one side. Some teachers recommend you roll to the right, but you may roll to any side that feels right to you. Wait a few more breaths before opening your eyes before raising your head slowly. Then lift the rest of the body until you sit upright.

Properly performed, the Corpse Posture is a very powerful tool for investigating your inner world. Even if you were to practice no other *āsana,* this posture will be incredibly beneficial to you. It will help you gain "firm ground" (*dridha-bhūmi*) in Yoga.

I have given relaxation so much space here
because it truly is a key practice of Yoga.

The Corpse Pose anticipates in some way our eventual demise as a living, breathing human being. At the end of our life, whatever else may happen to us, our body will become rigid and lifeless. This absolute certainty ought to make us very thoughtful. Each time we practice the Corpse Pose, we are reminded not only of our finite physical existence but also of the fact that the body, as we know it, does not truly confine us.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Benson, Herbert, with Miriam Z. Klipper. *The Relaxation Response.* New York: HarperCollins, rev. ed. 2000.

_____, with William Proctor. *Beyond the Relaxation Response.* New York: Berkeley Books, 1985.

Hartranft, Chip. *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation with Commentary.* Boston: Shambhala, 22003.

Iyengar, B. K. S. "Shav□sana (The Art of Relaxation)," in *Light on Prānāyāma*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981.

Lasater, Judith. *Relax and Renew.* Berekeley, Calif.: Rodmell Press, 1995.

Levey, Joel and Michelle. *The Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration and Meditation: Ancient Skills for Modern Minds.* Somerville, Mass.: Wisdom Publications, rev. ed. 2003.

Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati. *Yoga Nidra Meditation CD: Extreme Relaxation of Conscious Deep Sleep* (audio CD).

The altered state of consciousness associated with the Relaxation Response has been routineley experienced in Eastern and Western cultures throughout all ages. Subjectively, the feelings associated with this altered state of cosnciousness have been described as ecstatic, clairvoyant, beautiful, and totally relaxing. Others have felt ease with the world, peace of mind, and a sense of well-being akin to that feeling experienced after a period of exercise but without the fatigue. Most describe their feelings as *pleasurable*. Despite the diversity of description, there appears to be a universal element of rising above the mundane senses, a feeling beyond that of common-day existence.

—Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response,* p. 106.

For Reflection

1. Would you describe yourself as someone who has both feet firmly on the ground or as someone who tends to be "out of the body"? Would your family and friends describe you in the same way as you do? How do you behave in crisis situations? Do you lose your head, or are you level-headed and efficient? What limitations, if any, do you perceive in your particular way of being embodied? For instance, are you too disconnected from your body, or are you too disconnected from your mind? Are you an experience junkie, who'll jump out of an airplane just to experience the thrill of it, or are you by nature timid and afraid of physical pain?

2. Yoga is balance. What would you have to do relative to your physical existence to live a more balanced way? Think of good health maintenance, diet, sleep, exercise, work, entertainment.

3. On a scale from 1-10 (10 being the worst), how would you rate your level of emotional stress right now, and in general? How would you rate your level of physical tension? What could you do to decrease your levels of emotional stress and/or physical tension. What is it you typically do to increase those levels?

4. How would you describe and evaluate your bodily self-image? Do you regard yourself as too thin or too fat, beautiful or unattractive, etc.? How did you form this opinion of your bodily self? Do your family and friends see you in the same way? If not, what is the reason for the different perspectives?

5. What is your attitude about death and dying? Are you afraid of death or to die in a certain way? Does this fear occupy much of your thinking? Or do you prefer to not think about these matters at all? How are you preparing for a "good" death?

6. How did you react to the invitation to use prayer or positive affirmation to mark the beginning of your study sessions? Why did you react the way you did? If you reacted negatively, could you ever see yourself arriving at a different attitude?

7. What was your experience with the Corpse Posture? What physical and emotional/mental issues came up for you when doing it, or even when thinking about doing it?

8. Would you describe yourself as a hyperactive, active, or passive individual? Do you like to take on as many things as possible? Are you the life of the party or a wall flower? Do you tend to be the first to extend a hand in friendship, or do you wait for others to make the first

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

move? Are you assertive or shy? How does your extravertive or introvertive behavior relate to your physical and mental self-image? Would you like to be different? Or are you content with how you relate to others and the world at large?

9. Do you think that the body is important on the spiritual path? If not, why not? If so, in what way?

10. In your own life, do your actions conform to your thoughts, beliefs, principles, etc.? How do others see you on this point? (If you are not sure, you might want to ask others!)

11. Jot down a few of your own conceptions and expectations about Yoga and its practical cultivation (*sādhana*). Don't worry about being "right" or "wrong," or sounding "foolish." Write down whatever comes into your head, whether the memory is based on your own previous study or just on conversations you have had with friends and other students. This will help you clarify, at this early stage in the course, just where you stand on, and what you understand about, the subject of Yoga. Then, as you progress through the course, you will be able to continually refer back to this writing and see how your conceptions and expectations have changed and evolved.

Self-reflection is a traditional yogic practice, and without it there can be little or no spiritual progress. We must understand the various mechanisms of our human personality by which we cling to our physical body, our mind, and their respective objects. Our true nature is pure Awareness (*cit*), but out of spiritual ignorance we identify with a finite body-mind rather than infinite Consciousness.

Through self-reflection we gradually become transparent to ourselves. We must become like glass, reflecting reality without distortion, without the biased elaborations of the mind shot through with negative emotions and egoic motivations. Self-reflection shines the light of Awareness into all nooks and corners of our personality and gradually removes the grime of lifetimes from the chambers of our mind.

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What is meant by *svādhyāya*? *(Check one)*

(a) reflection
(b) self-study
(c) traditional study
(d) intellectual inquiry

2. What is meant by *sādhana*? *(Check one)*

(a) integration
(b) spiritual practice
(c) the path
(d) physical exercise

3. What is the Sanskrit name for "relaxation"? *(Check one)*

(a) *shānti*
(b) *nirodha*
(c) *shaithilya*
(d) *shava-āsana*

4**. What is the Sanskrit word for "dispassion"? *(Check one)***

(a) *samnyāsa*
(b) *vairāgya*
(c) *samāpatti*
(d) *samatva*

5. Who is Patanjali traditionally said to be an incarnation of? *(Check one or more)*

(a) Brahma
(b) Shiva
(c) Vishnu
(d) Ananta
(e) Shesha

6. What are the two requirements, according to Patanjali, that make a proper *sana*? (*Check one or more)*

(a) stability
(b) tranquillity
(c) ease
(d) straight spine
(e) gaze focused inward

7. Which of the following is most important for Yoga to succeed? *(Check one or more*)

(a) a *guru*
(b) *abhyāsa*
(c) *vairāgya*
(d) both practice and renunciation
(e) mindfulness
(f) study

8. What would be a good sign that a particular Yoga practice is authentic? *(Check one or more)*

(a) it is easy
(b) it comes recommended by a friend
(c) there is only one version of it
(d) it has a Sanskrit name
(e) it is mentioned in one of the traditional Yoga scriptures
(f) it is given by a qualified *guru*
(g) it comes with a very precise description
(h) it cannot be found in any mass market paperback

9. Which of the following mental attitudes marks "yogic practice"? *(Check one or more)*

(a) tenacious persistence regardless of pain
(b) trust in one's good karma
(c) blind faith in the teachings
(d) striving for success
(e) relaxed effort

10. Which of the following mental attitudes characterizes "inner renunciation"? *(Check one or more)*

(a) indifference to everything
(b) acceptance of adversity
(c) absolute tolerance
(d) unconcern with intellectual matters

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 2
Understanding Patanjali and His Yoga-Sūtra

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand the structure and contents of Patanjali's Yoga-Sūtra and to appreciate its place in the development of Yoga, as well as to practice self-observation*

- Who is Patanjali?
- What is a Sūtra?
- The Classical Commentaries
- A Whiff of Sanskrit
- Mapping the Yoga-Sūtra
- The Classical Metaphor of the Chariot
- Lower Mind and Higher Mind
- Is Wisdom the Same as Intuition?
- A Bird's-Eye View of the History of Yoga
- Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina Yoga
- Yoga and Sāmkhya
- Yoga and Vedānta
- Observing the Mind
- The Big Controversy Over the Meaning of Nirodha
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Self-Observation
- Further Reading
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 2

WHO IS PATANJALI?

Most likely, the composer of the *Yoga-Sūtra* lived c. 200 A.D., as his work shows the influence of early Mahāyāna Buddhism.

We really know nothing about the historical Patanjali who composed the *Yoga-Sūtra*. In yogic mythology he is identified as an incarnation of the cosmic serpent Shesha or Ananta (see Lesson 1). In fact, there have been several Patanjalis of whom the most famous is the grammarian who lived c. 200-300 B.C. He is traditionally often thought to also have composed the *Yoga-Sūtra* and a work on medicine, though neither attribution is very likely. The following is a traditional invocation addressed to Patanjali, which can be found at the beginning of Vyāsa's *Yoga-Bhāshya*:

yogn icÒSy pdn vaCa' ml' xrIrSy c vÛkn -
yo_pakroÒ pvr' mnIna' ptÇil' paÇilranto_iSm –
Aabahpäzakar' x¼c¹ais/air,' -
shSrixrs' ë t' p',maim ptÇilm' --

yogena cittasya padena vācām malam sharīrasya ca vaidyakena /
yo'pākarottam pravaram munīnām patanjalim prānjalir ānato'smi //
ābāhu purusha-ākāram shankha-cakrāsi-dhārinam /
sahasra-shirasam shvetam pranamāmi patanjalim //

I bow with folded hands to Sage Patanjali, who gave Yoga for [the pacification of] the mind, grammar for [clarity of] speech, and medicine for [removing] the flaws of the body. I salute Patanjali, the embodiment of Spirit (*purusha*), whose hands hold a conch and a disc, and who [is crowned by] a white thousand-headed [cobra].

sūtra

WHAT IS A SŪTRA?

The word *sūtra,* which is related to the Latin word *sutura* and our English "suture," means literally "thread." In Indian philosophy, it is widely used to denote a thread of thought, and this is exactly the meaning behind the title *Yoga-Sūtra.* Patanjali's work is a compilation of his threads of thought on Yoga, which were to be memorized by his disciples. *Sūtras* correspond roughly to what we call aphorisms, except they are always very succinct. In fact, they often are so brief that without the traditional commentaries it would be virtually impossible to decipher them, because words can have all kinds of meanings, and in order to make sense of a sentence we need to know just what is being said and which of several (or even many) connotations of a word is intended. Otherwise it will be all Greek to us!

THE CLASSICAL COMMENTARIES

Like any *Sūtra,* Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* is considered a fundamental source text. In the course of time, other Yoga authorities inspired by this Sanskrit work composed commentaries on it. Sometimes the author of a *Sūtra,* which must be as concise as possible, writes his own exposition on it. This does not appear to have been the case with the *Yoga-Sūtra;* at least no such commentary has survived. The well-known *Yoga-Bhāshya* ascribed to Vyāsa (to whom every text that had no identifiable author seems to have been attributed) was written c. 450 A.D., that is, about three centuries after Patanjali. Because the *Yoga-Sūtra* is so incredibly concise, Vyāsa's commentary has proven crucial to understanding Patanjali's brief statements. At the same time, we must bear in mind that neither Vyāsa nor any other traditional commentator has preserved Patanjali's actual teachings with perfect fidelity. Therefore a careful study of the *Yoga-Sūtra* itself remains an important prerequisite for comprehending Patanjali's school of Yoga.

Other significant traditional commentaries are:

- *Tattva-Vaishāradī* ("Elucidation of Reality") by Vācaspati Mishra (9th century)
- *Rāja-Mārtanda* ("Royal Sun-Bird") by King Bhoja of Dhārā (11th century)
- *Vivarana* ("Exposition") by Shankara Bhagavatpāda (14th century; not to be confused with the famous Shankara)
- *Yoga-Siddhānta-Candrikā* ("Moonlight on the Teachings of Yoga") by Nārāyana Tīrtha (15th century)
- *Sūtra-Artha-Bodhinī* ("Illumination of the Meaning of the *Sūtra*") by Nārāyana Tīrtha
- *Yoga-Vārttika* ("Commentary on Yoga") by Vijnāna Bhikshu (16th century)
- *Yoga-Sāra-Samgraha* ("Compendium of the Essence of Yoga") by Vijnāna Bhikshu
- *Brihatī* ("Great [Commentary]") by Nāgojī Bhatta (16th century)
- *Laghvī* ("Short [Commentary]") by Nāgojī Bhatta

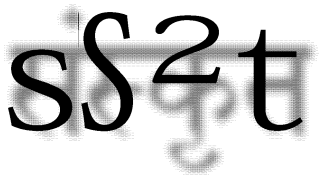
I have mentioned other commentators and furnished further details in my essay "The Elaboration of Wisdom—The Commentarial Literature" in *The Yoga Tradition* (pp. 234–237).

> Those who do not study are only cattle dressed up in men's clothes.
>
> —*Hardhitting Chinese Proverb*

This secondary literature is scholarly and often pedantic, and with few exceptions Yoga students must not expect too many practically useful details. Yet the above-cited works are important for an understanding of the philosophy of Classical Yoga, as it developed after Patanjali. Thus far, however, only the commentaries by Vyāsa, Vācaspati Mishra, Bhoja, Shankara Bhagavatpāda, and Vijnāna Bhikshu are available in English, though some of these are hard to obtain.

A WHIFF OF SANSKRIT

Sanskrit, which is an Indo-European language, is the sacred language of the Hindus and Indian Buddhists. Many, though by no means all, Yoga texts are composed in this ancient tongue, which today is spoken by only a few thousand people.



samskrita

Other languages used by Yoga masters are Tamil, Marathi, Bengali, Hindi, etc. The most commonly employed alphabet of Sanskrit texts is the *deva-nāgarī* script. In this course you are not required to learn Sanskrit or a new script, but I thought you might like to know a few things about both, since you are studying a particular Sanskrit text—Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*.

First, Sanskrit is a noun-friendly language, that is, it uses verbs sparingly. This is even more so in the case of *sūtras*. Thus the *Yoga-Sūtra* has very few verbal forms, which also makes it perhaps a bit easier to understand for someone who does not know Sanskrit, because verbal conjugation can get quite tricky. The auxiliary verb "is" (plural "are") is generally implied, unless the writer wants to emphasize it. Thus it would suffice to write *aham brahma* to say "I (am) the Absolute." But the well-known traditional saying is *aham brahmāsmi,* that is, *aham brahma asmi* to emphasize the fact that "I am (indeed) the Absolute." A similar rule applies to articles (like "the" and "a"), which are generally omitted in Sanskrit.

Another thing to know about Sanskrit is that it comes in syllables rather than letters. There are 50 basic sounds (phonemes) in this sacred language (some authorities count only 48 phonemes). Each consonantal syllable has an implicit "a"-sound. Thus, instead of saying "b," "d," or "k," Sanskrit has the syllables "ba," "da," and "ka," and so on, which then can be modified to "be," "bi," "bo," "bau", so so forth.

For example, the word *yoga* is made up of the two syllables *yo* and *ga,* which are written in the *deva-nāgarī* script as follows: य + ग = योग. By contrast, the word *yuga* ("world age") is written like this: युग. The small curl underneath the syllable *ya* modifies it to produce the sound *yu.* And the words *yogī* and *yoginī* look like this: योगी and योगिनी. When य stands on its own, it is a simple *ya* sound, just as ग and न are sounded as *ga* and *na* respectively.

Now you are almost ready to read the *Yoga-Sūtra* in the original! If you don't believe me, try to write *niyoga* ("duty, function, business"). If you would like to find out more about Sanskrit, you might want to consult the online Wikipedia, which has a nice article on this language, which is still spoken and written by some 200,000 people. In fact, there are a number of very useful Internet sites from which you can learn the rudiments of Sanskrit.

A helpful grammar for beginners is Thomas Egenes, *Introduction to Sanskrit.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2d rev. ed., 1996. 2 vols.

MAPPING THE YOGA-SŪTRA: ITS STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

pāda

Most versions of the *Yoga-Sūtra* comprise 195 aphorisms; some have 196 but the additional *sūtra* is likely part of the *Yoga-Bhāshya,* the oldest available commentary on Patanjali's text. The aphorism in question is inserted between 3.21 and 3.22 and reads: *etena shabda-ādy antardhānam uktam,* "By this the invisibility of sound etc. is explained." Now you know why some translations seem to have at least one more *sūtra*. Whether 195 or 196, the aphorisms are distributed over four chapters or sections (*pāda*) as follows:

1. *Samādhi-pāda* (Chapter on Ecstasy):	51 aphorisms
2. *Sādhana-pāda* (Chapter on Practice):	55 aphorisms
3. *Vibhūti-pāda* (Chapter on Powers):	55 aphorisms
4. *Kaivalya-pāda* (Chapter on Liberation):	34 aphorisms

The organization of the *sūtras* into these four sections is not entirely satisfactory, and it is possible that it was made by one of Patanjali's students or possibly even Vyāsa, the author of the *Yoga-Bhāshya.* I have discussed all this at length in my academic monograph *The Yoga-Sūtra: An Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis* (Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1979), which has been long out of print.

For our present purposes, it is important to mention just one of my findings, namely that the *Yoga-Sūtra* appears to be a composite of two "texts": The bulk of Patanjali's work is represented by what I call the *kriyā-yoga* text, which has inserted into it a series of aphorisms (starting with 2.28 and possibly extending to 3.8) that deal with the eight limbs of the yogic path and which I have collectively designated as *ashta-anga-yoga.*

I should mention that there also are variant readings of Sanskrit terms, which, however, do not change their meaning or the meaning of the aphorism in which they are found. For instance, some manuscripts have *asamprayoge* for *asamyoge* in aphorism 3.21, but in either case this translates into "dissociation, disconnection, disruption." Again, this is nothing to worry about!

When we look at the overall organization of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* we find that Patanjali started out by providing a general introduction of the ecstatic path, which is at the core of his system. Then he furnished important details of the path, notably the role and function of what today would be called the unconscious. This he followed with a description of the paranormal powers, which are apparently an inevitable byproduct of yogic discipline. Finally, he mapped out the higher processes of Yoga leading to the supreme goal of liberation (*kaivalya*). This is a breathtaking journey, which takes us from our average distracted mind and its countless misconstructions about reality directly into the spiritual dimension, the supramundane and transtemporal Spirit (*purusha*).

THE CLASSICAL METAPHOR OF THE CHARIOT

These two seemingly disparate meanings of *yoga*—as goal and method—are actually relics of a far-off time when the word still referred primarily to the yoking of horses to a chariot. The charioteer had a goal in mind—to steer the chariot into the battle—and for this he needed to control the horses, which, when left on their own, tend to roam at random. Later on, the practitioner of Yoga was likened to a charioteer, for he too had to control the unruly horses of the senses in order to reach his goal. In Patanjali's Yoga school, which came to be widely known as Rāja-Yoga, the practitioner attempts to harness or "restrict" or "control" (*nirodha*) not a bucking steed but the equally wild behavior ("fluctuations" or *vrittis*) of the mind. The old *Katha-Upanishad* (1.3.3–6, 9) describes the process of yoking or harnessing in the following metaphorical way:

Know the Self (*ātman*) as the charioteer
and the body as the chariot.
Know the higher mind (*buddhi*) as the chariot-driver
and the lower mind (*manas*) as the reins.

The senses (*indriya*), they say, are the horses;
the sense objects are their pastures.
That which is yoked to one's senses and mind (*manas*),
the wise call the "enjoyer."

He who lacks understanding,
whose mind (*manas*) is always unyoked—
his senses are uncontrolled,
like a chariot-driver's unruly horses.

But he who has understanding,
whose mind (*manas*) is always yoked—
his senses are controlled;
he reaches the end of his journey.

Krishna and Arjuna in their war chariot during the Bharata war, as told in the Mahābhārata *epic*

In this very moment, is your chariot-driver firmly controlling your horses?

LOWER MIND, HIGHER MIND

buddhi

manas

Ever since the *Upanishads,* the oldest of which were composed some 3,000 years ago, the mind has been understood to comprise both a sense-dependent part (often called *manas*) and a higher faculty, which is usually called *buddhi.* The former is close to our emotional life, especially our negative emotions (like anger, fear, greed, jealousy, etc.). It is rather unimaginative and uninspired. The latter aspect of the mind, by contrast, is inherently reasonable, but its reasonableness derives from a deeper understanding. Hence it is also often associated with intuition and illumination. This is suggested by the term *buddhi* itself, which connotes awareness and mindfulness.

The lower mind gives us facts and figures, the higher mind makes sense of everything. Neurophysiologically, perhaps, these two aspects of the mind relate to the left and right cerebral hemisphere. From a yogic perspective, they belong to different vibrational levels, with the *buddhi* representing a higher vibration than the *manas.* While the *manas* sticks close to the senses, the *buddhi* can be said to be more closely connected with the Spirit, or transcendental Self, whose "light" it receives if it is appropriately trained or disciplined. If the *manas* is by nature hyperactive, the *buddhi* has a predominance of *sattva*—the factor of lucidity—in it. Sometimes the term *sattva* is even used as a synonym for *buddhi.*

> Wisdom, properly so called, is nothing else but this: the perfect knowledge of the truth in all matters whatsoever.
>
> —Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (1642)

IS WISDOM THE SAME AS INTUITION?

The *buddhi* is the receptacle of wisdom—the kind of knowledge that helps us grow and transcend the ego. On one level, wisdom means seeing the larger picture. The *manas* all too easily becomes lost among the "trees" of facts and figures, unless it has the assistance of the higher mind, which sees the whole forest. There is clearly a connection between wisdom and intuition; both are sudden and complete within themselves. Perhaps it would not be too far off to say that wisdom is a form of intuition that relates to our spiritual development by giving us insight into our character, both its strength and weaknesses, and by furnishing us with glimpses of our true nature, which transcends both the body and the mind (i.e., our thoughts, emotions, "character").

◘ Now read Essays #53–55 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF YOGA

A soapstone seal from Mohenjo Daro, a great urban center of the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization

My book *The Yoga Tradition,* on which our 800-hour course on the history, philosophy, and literature of Yoga is based, offers an extensive treatment of Yoga's 5000-year development. In the context of the present course, I will only provide a highly condensed (*sūtra*-like) bird's-eye view, so that you can understand Patanjali's work in its proper historical context.

The earliest traces of Yoga can be found in the archaic *Rig-Veda* ("Knowledge of Praise"), a collection of 1032 Sanskrit hymns addressed to various deities. Originally thought by Western scholars to be little more than 3500 years old, this ancient hymnody is now deemed to be likely very much older. Although it doesn't use the word *yoga* in its technical sense, many of the later yogic ideas and practices are certainly foreshadowed in the *Rig-Veda* and often are given the name *tapas* (lit. "heat," asceticism). Thus I have come to favor a chronology for Yoga that starts some 5000 years ago with the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization (formerly Indus Civilization). Many scholars still subscribe to an outdated chronology, which was invented in the 19th century and which dates the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization to about 2000 B.C. and attributes the *Rig-Veda* to invading "Aryan" tribes who supposedly devastated the towns along the Indus River in c. 1500 B.C. I have discussed this question in my coauthored book *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2001).

Yoga's long development can conveniently be divided into the following historical "types":

1. **Archaic (or Vedic) Yoga, or Proto-Yoga** (the teachings found in the *Rig-Veda* and the other three *Vedas,* as well as the *Brāhmana* and *Āranyaka* ritual texts based on the *Vedas*)
2. **Pre-Classical or Epic Yoga** (the teachings developed during the protracted era preceding Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra,* notably those found in the *Upanishads,* the *Mahābhārata,* including the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* and the *Rāmāyana*)
3. **Classical Yoga** (as articulated in the *Yoga-Sūtra* and its dependent Sanskrit commentaries, such as the *Yoga-Bhāshya* of Vyāsa, the *Tattva-Vaishāradī* of Vācaspati Mishra, and the *Yoga-Vārttika* of Vijnāna Bhikshu, etc., and despite the fact that not all of these commentators champion Patanjali's characteristic dualism)
4. **Post-Classical Yoga** (the teachings developed subsequent to Patanjali, notably those of the *Yoga-Upanishads, Tantras, Āgamas,* and scriptures of Hatha-Yoga)
5. **Modern Yoga** (the teachings created from the 19th century on, including the developments of Contemporary Yoga)

These discrete categories must not blind us to the fact that the evolution of Yoga has been remarkably continuous and that even so-called innovations were firmly anchored in the preceding teachings. Think of Yoga as an enormous river with all sorts of currents, arms, and inlets, as well as some stagnant pools, and with its delta now covering the entire globe. It remains to be seen which of its diverse flows will run dry and which will continue on into the future.

At present, the Hindu arm of this river of Yoga has its strongest current in Hatha-Yoga (or a Westernized version of it), while the Buddhist arm is perhaps most strongly represented in the yogic teachings of Vajrayana. The Jaina arm of the river of Yoga still has pure currents but is running only weakly. Patanjali's current of the Hindu arm is rather poorly represented at this time, which makes the present study course even more important. The *Yoga-Sūtra* affords us a wonderful entry point into the whole navigable river of Yoga.

◘ Now read Essay #17 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

HINDU, BUDDHIST, AND JAINA YOGA

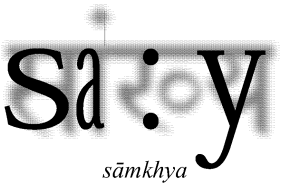
Most students of Yoga automatically assume that Yoga is an integral part of Hinduism. While this is true, the word *yoga* in its technical sense is also known and used within the great cultural complexes of Buddhism and Jainism. These have their own *forms* of Yoga. Thus it is somewhat misleading to say, "He practices Yoga and also is interested in Buddhist meditation." It would be more correct to say, "He practices Hindu Yoga postures and Buddhist Yoga meditation." That Buddhism has its own form of Yoga is especially apparent in Tibetan Buddhism, where the higher practices are even known as "Unexcelled Yoga" (*anuttara-yoga*).

Thinking of the spiritual teachings and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism as so many *forms* of Yoga helps us cultivate an appreciation and tolerance for all of them.

◘ Now read Essay #11 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

**Simply be receptive to all lessons of life,
without prejudging anything,
and the river of Yoga in all its forms
will safely conduct you to enlightenment.**

YOGA AND SĀMKHYA



sāmkhya

Yoga and Sāmkhya are two prominent philosophical branches of Hinduism, which have a common ancestry. They developed out of the philosophical-cultural heritage of the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization, as we can glean it from the *Rig-Veda*, which can be viewed as the only surviving literary document from that early civilization. Sāmkhya's legendary founder was Sage Kapila. In subsequent periods, Yoga and Sāmkhya developed conjointly as Sāmkhya-Yoga, until in the classical era, they split into independent philosophical systems (*darshana*). While Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* captures the philosophy and practice of Classical Yoga, Īshvara Krishna's *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* (dated c. 450 A.D.) serves as a textbook of Classical Sāmkhya. Both systems have much in common (notably their dualist metaphysics), but it would appear that Classical Sāmkhya emphasizes discernment (*viveka*) and renunciation (*vairāgya*), while Classical Yoga adds to these two factors a third, which is the complex discipline of ecstatic states (*samādhi*). It is through the diverse levels of ecstasy that the *yogin* is able to understand and influence the subtle mechanisms of the mind. His practice of discernment, therefore, can occur at a deeper level than that of the Sāmkhya practitioner. However, traditionally, the Sāmkhya authorities believed that their system also could lead to liberation by reliance on the illuminating power of the higher mind, or *buddhi.*

■ Now read Essay #57 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

YOGA AND VEDĀNTA

vedānta

The word *vedānta* means literally "Veda's end" and refers to the metaphysical teachings that, starting with the early *Upanishads,* articulated approaches to liberation that are based on the Vedic revelation and seek to develop it. There are numerous Vedānta schools, and most—but by no means all of them—favor a nondualist (*advaita*) interpretation of existence: There is only the One (*eka*); everything else is either a manifestation of that Ultimate Being or is purely illusory. This contrasts sharply with the philosophical dualism and realism of both Classical Yoga and Classical Sāmkhya, which both assume that there are multiple transcendental Spirits (*purusha*) who/which are only apparently trapped in the mechanisms of the Cosmos (*prakriti*). In Western circles, the best known school of Vedānta is that of Shankara, who is usually placed in the eighth century A.D. His teacher's teacher, Gaudāpāda, wrote a yogic commentary on the *Māndūkya-Upanishad* in which he expounded the Yoga of Noncontact (Asparsha-Yoga). Vedānta can also be seen as a particular branch of Yoga, namely Jnāna-Yoga.

■ Now read Essay #56 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

OBSERVING THE MIND

With the practice of self-observation, we enter the very heart of yogic discipline. Left to its own devices, the mind is like a monkey jumping from branch to branch and causing mischief. Self-observation is the beginning of controlling the mind to make it useful in the process of spiritual growth and final liberation. Patanjali's second aphorism defines Yoga as mind control—not someone else's mind but our own!

Please note that the present translation of the *sūtras* does not always match the rendering in my book, though it is essentially the same. The differences may help you to appreciate that there are a number of ways in which Patanjali's aphorisms can be translated into English, with all of them being basically correct. The rendering given in this course tends to be more concise. Also, the simplified form of transliteration adopted in the course will help you with the pronunciation of Sanskrit terms.

1.2: YOGASH CITTA-VRITTI-NIRODHAH
"Yoga is the control of the fluctuations of the mind."

1.3: TADĀ DRASHTUH SVA-RŪPE'VASTHĀNAM
"Then the appearance of the Seer in its essential form [occurs]."

When we practice self-observation, we automatically slow down the mental chatter, and this allows the transcendental Awareness (*cit*), the Spirit (or *purusha*), to reveal itself more to us. At least this is one way of looking at the situation. The more we stand back and observe the mind, the more we assume the position of the transcendental Witness (*sākshin*). This is the key message of the third aphorism.

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.2–3 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In the simplified spelling of Sanskrit words adopted in this course, *sh* is used to designate *ś,* as used in the academic nomenclature and found in my book *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.* For those interested in Sanskrit, *sh (ś)* in the word *yogash* of aphorism 1.2 stands for the *visarga* sound Ò(yogaÒ),which, according to the euphonic rules of Sanskrit must be converted to *ś* when followed by a palatal, in this case the *c* of *citta.* In aphorism 1.2, the apostrophe (') after *sva-rūpe* is needed to indicate that the initial *a* of the following word was dropped: *'vasthānam* for *avasthānam.*

Yoga is about self-control, not the control of others or the environment. Without self-control, spiritual growth is impossible.

THE BIG CONTROVERSY OVER THE MEANING OF NIRODHA

Most scholars maintain that technical term *nirodha* means "control" or "restriction," but some argue that it means "cessation." Why would this be so important? Very simply, if Patanjali's second aphorism were to read "Yoga is the *cessation* of the fluctuations [of the mind]," it is possible to interpret Patanjali's metaphysics, as for instance Ian Whicher has done, along nondualistic lines. Thus Whicher in his book *The Integrity of the Yoga-Darśana* translates aphorism 1.2 as follows: "Yoga is the cessation of [the misidentification with] the modifications of the mind."

Thus Whicher understands *nirodha* as "cessation," and, more importantly, relates it not so much to the mental modifications (*vritti*) themselves but to the bad habit of identifying with them.

This reinterpretation allows Whicher to postulate a state of consciousness in which there are *vrittis* but no identification with them. While such a state is possible and is in fact celebrated in Tantra as the condition of open-eyed, natural ecstasy (*sahaja-samādhi*), there is really nothing in the *Yoga-Sūtra* that would indicate that Patanjali believed in this particular spiritual possibility. On the contrary, there is every indication that he firmly maintained in strict dualism, a sharp split between Spirit (*purusha*) and Cosmos (*prakriti*). Hence the Cosmos, in the form of the individual human mind, must be completely controlled and ultimately transcended for true Self-realization, or liberation, to occur. The Vedāntic ideal of liberation during embodiment is foreign to Classical Yoga.

By postulating that Patanjali believed in the possibility of living liberation, Whicher effectively wants to do away with the need for radical world renunciation (*nivritti*), which, at least according to the traditional interpretations of Classical Yoga, is a hallmark of Patanjali's approach. While a Yoga that allows the *yogin* or *yoginī* to be involved in worldly activities definitely holds greater appeal for contemporary spiritual seekers, this is clearly not Patanjali's orientation.

Mental fluctuations (*vritti*) do not cease altogether but are merely controlled in the state of meditation, and they will inevitably pop up again when the mind is externalized once more. Similarly, the mental processes occurring in the state of ecstasy, which are known as *pratyayas,* must be controlled in order to achieve transconceptual ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), which then gradually eliminates all mental activity and thereby leads to disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*). Once the *vrittis* and *pratyayas* have ceased altogether, it is impossible for them to make their appearance again in our life.

What happens when we don't practice self-observation? Well, we sooner or later (typically sooner) start to identify with what is arising in our mind: We behave like someone who after looking into a mirror for a long time begins to think of his mirror image as himself. In Greek mythology, Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in the water—a pretty desperate situation, you must admit. Here is how Patanjali puts it in more philosophical language:

1.4: VRITTI-SĀRŪPYAM ITARATRA
"At other times, conformity with the fluctuations [is the case]."

1.5: VRITTAYAH PANCATAYAH KLISHTA-AKLISHTĀH
"The fluctuations are fivefold; afflicted or nonafflicted."

Lack of self-observation would perhaps not matter if it did not have such dire consequences for each of us. But it does. It keeps us trapped in patterns of behavior that cause suffering (*duhkha*) to ourselves and often also to others. Metaphysically, it prevents us from realizing our innate freedom.

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.4–5 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
NOTE: Some printed editions have *pancatayya* for *pancatayah.*

Patanjali next tells us what he means by "fluctuations" (*vritti*), and we ought to study his definitions reasonably carefully, because these fluctuations make up our own mental life and are so familiar to us that, unless we happen to be a psychologist or philosopher, we do not pay proper attention to them.

1.6: PRAMĀNA-VIPARYAYA-VIKALPA-NIDRĀ-SMRITAYAH
"Valid cognition, misconception, conceptualization, sleep [and] memory [are the five fluctuations of the mind]."

1.7: PRATYAKSHA-ANUMĀNA-ĀGAMĀH PRAMĀNĀNI
"Valid cognition [is based on] perception, inference, [and] testimony."

1.8: VIPARYAYO MITHYĀ-JNĀNAM ATAD-RŪPA-PRATISHTHAM
"Misconception is erroneous knowledge not based on the [actual] appearance of that [which is the underlying object]."

1.9: SHABDA-JNĀNA-ANUPĀTĪ VASTU-SHŪNYO VIKALPAH
"Conceptualization is empty of [perceived] object, following verbal knowledge."

Continued

1.10: ABHĀVA-PRATYAYA-ĀLAMBANĀ VRITTIR NIDRĀ

"Sleep is a fluctuation founded on the idea of the nonoccurrence [of other ideas in consciousness]."

1.11: ANUBHŪTA-VISHAYA-ASAMPRAMOSHAH SMRITIH

"Remembering is the nondeprivation of an experienced object."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.6–11 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 1.10, *vrittir* stands for *vrittih;* the change is required because of the following *n* sound of *nidrā.*

We have many subpersonalities. We behave one way when we are in the presence of a child, another way when we discuss philosophical matters with another adult, and yet another way when we are criticized by a superior. All these subpersonalities are like masks that we wear to play the game of life. We behave like actors enacting diverse roles, but all too often we identify with our various roles and start to take them very seriously. When we do this, we lose all sense of proportion. Suddenly we are only the role we have voluntarily adopted and lose sight of the fact that we normally enact many such roles and that none is really who we truly are.

The adepts of Yoga as a single voice tell us that we are not what we appear to be and what we often believe we are. Instead, we are immortal Awareness, Spirit, the transcendental Witness free from all limitations, beyond space-time, beyond karmic necessity, beyond suffering and sorrow. We simply need to take off all the masks we habitually insist on wearing and realize our innate freedom. We already *are* the ease and happiness we consciously or unconsciously seek in all we do.

Practice makes perfect.
No practice leaves you where and as you are.

Suggested Yoga Practice
SELF-OBSERVATION

1. Sit quietly in your favorite meditation posture or in a comfortable chair, mentally preparing to spend at least 15 minutes doing the following exercise and to do so as intensively as you can muster. Switch off your radio, TV, telephone, etc. Close your eyes for this particular exercise.

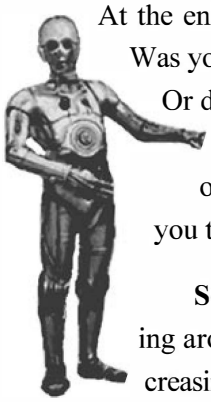
2. Begin by gently bringing your attention to your body. Feel your hands, arms, trunk, legs, feet, and your head. Feel your skin and your internal organs. Notice how your body feels, both as a whole and in its various parts. Make no judgment about your observation. Simply notice. Do this for at least 2 minutes.

3. Now pay attention to your breathing. Allow your breath to flow normally, without interfering with it. Is your breath even and smooth or jagged and shallow? Again make no judgment about your observation. Simply notice. Do this for at least 2 minutes.

4. Next pay attention to your thoughts. Be an impartial observer of all the diverse notions and their accompanying feelings, if any, that arise over the next 10 minutes or so. Don't follow any of your thoughts, but if you do simply bring your attention back to the witnessing function.

5. If witnessing your thoughts becomes too challenging, return to an earlier phase of this exercise, such as feeling your body or paying attention to your breathing.

REVIEW



At the end of the exercise, review your performance. Was your body agitated at the beginning? Was your mind more agitated than your body? Did your body and/or mind slowly calm down? Or did a flurry of thoughts happen all the way through the exercise? If this was your first time meditating—and this is what you were doing—you will have learned a lot about your own body-mind and its automaticities. Maybe the experiment was intriguing enough for you to want to do this or a similar exercise on a regular basis?

Self-observation is not only possible but desirable throughout the day! Instead of walking around like automatons, we can cultivate alertness, or mindfulness, so that we become increasingly aware of our thoughts and their influence on everything we do.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Deikman, Arthur J. *The Observing Self: Mysticism and Psychotherapy.* Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1985.

Feuerstein, Georg, et al. *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization.* Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2001.

Goenka, S. N. *Meditation Now: Inner Peace Through Inner Wisdom.* Onalaska, Wash.: Pariyatti Publishing, 2002.

Hart, William. *The Art of Living: Vipassana Meditation: As Taught by S. N. Goenka.* San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1987.

Whicher, Ian. *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana.* Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1998.

"The Yogic discipline of Ramana Maharshi prescribed the exercise of "Who am I?" to demonstrate that the observing self is not an object; it does not belong to the domains of thinking, feeling, or action: 'If I lost my arm, I would still exist, therefore, I am not my arm. If I could not hear, I would still exist. Therefore, I am not my hearing.' And so on, until finally, 'I am not this thought,' which leads to a radically different experience of the self. . .

The observing self is not part of the object world formed by our thoughts and sensory perception because, literally, it has no limits; everything else does. Thus, everday consciousness contains a transcendent element that we seldom notice because that element is the very ground of our experience."

—Arthur Deikman, *The Observing Self,* p. 95

For Reflection

1. Ponder your own history, that is, the story of your life. How do you relate to your past? Do you tend to ignore or dwell on it? Have there been events you like to but can't easily forget? Do you think that your past continues to influence you, either positively or negatively? What about the "deep past" of previous lifetimes? If you could rewrite your past, what would you change? Have you ever envied other people for their "better" past? On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 standing for "fully integrated"), how would you assess your current integration of past experiences?What would you have to do (or what have you done) to integrate your past with your present life?

2. In this Lesson, we have wondered about Patanjali's identity. What do you think/feel about your own personal identity? Who are you? Do you regard yourself as a mystery or as something obvious? Are you the body, your thoughts, your awareness? You may have given a considered philosophical answer to the preceding questions, but how do you live your identity from day to day? Do you in fact assume you are the roles you have to play in life (parent, child, teacher, student, etc.)? What is it that makes you become submerged in your various roles?

3. Where are you? That is, where is your identity located? Do you tend to point to your chest or heart area? To your head or brain? To nowhere in particular? What have you been able to observe about the arising of attention? Does awareness have a location? If it doesn't, what is it? (To make this and the other questions really meaningful, you must oblige yourself to not merely think them but also *feel* them.)

4. What is the most surprising thing you have observed about yourself?

5. When you closely inspect your behavior during the day, what patterns are most prominent? How do they relate to your past? If you find them unproductive or unbecoming, what would you have to do to change them? What would be your reasons for even wanting to change them? Do you see others animate the same patterns as you? Which of the patterns present in the behavior of others do you find the most annoying? Do you happen to have them as well? Would others find your patterns annoying? How does this relate to Yoga's moral injunction about nonharming, which we will discuss in a later Lesson?

6. Do you find it difficult to observe yourself? Do you tend to or find it easier to observe ("watch") others? Are you overly critical toward yourself and/or others? How does self-observation relate to self-criticism or self-loathing? When is self-observation healthy or unhealthy?

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"For Reflection" continued

7. Are you considered a left- or right-brainer? Do you solve problems typically by analyzing all its components, one after the other? Or do you typically jump around in your thoughts looking for a solution, which then presents itself by a leap of intuition? Do you see your particular way of approaching problems either purely logically or purely intuitively as an advantage or a limitation? What do you think of people who do *not* have your approach to problem solving? In other words, if you are the logical type, do you consider intuition a lot of hogwash? Or, if you are the intuitive type, do you regard logic as tiresome? Most people stand somewhere in the middle between logic and intuition. Where do you stand, and are you satisfied with how your mind works, or do you feel you should hone your logical or intuitive skills?

8. Are you the "show me" type? Or do you tend to trust other people's judgments and views? Has your particular orientation on this ever got you into trouble? If so, what have you learned from the experience?

9. Yoga authorities, including Patanjali, make many claims about existence and how the mind works. How do you relate to this fact? Are you able to suspend your personal judgment easily, or do you find yourself constantly being annoyed with Yoga authorities and with the opinions you do not share with them? Should there be room for faith? Or should one expect everything to make immediate sense?

10. Do you find self-observation satisfying/meaningful or do you tend to get agitated, because you find the process alien or because you don't like what you see? Do you automatically assume that the process of Yoga must be pleasant? If you find self-observation pleasurable, are you indulging in self-watching or have you hit upon the joy of true insight into yourself in which case you should also be able to delight in personal change?

Knowledge of the self is the mother of all knowledge. So it is incumbent on me to know my self, to know it completely, to know its minutiae, its characteristics, its subtleties, and its very atoms.

—Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931), *The Philosophy of Logic*

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What is a *sūtra*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) a philosophical statement
(b) a witty aphorism
(c) a concise statement for easy memorization
(d) a memory "thread"

2. Under what other names does Patanjali's Yoga go by? *(Check one or more)*

(a) Archaic Yoga
(b) *Yoga-darshana*
(c) Rāja-Yoga
(d) Hatha-Yoga
(e) Classical Yoga
(f) Epic Yoga

3. How old is Yoga? *(Check one)*

(a) 2,500 years
(b) 3,500 years
(c) 5,000 years
(d) 6,500 years

4. Who was the founder of the Sāmkhya tradition? *(Check one)*

(a) Īshvara Krishna
(b) Krishna
(c) Patanjali
(d) Kapila
(e) Vācaspati Mishra

5. What are the four levels of *nirodha*? *(Name all four)*

6. As what kind of mental activity would Patanjali consider day-dreaming? ***(Check one)***

(a) *pramāna*
(b) *smriti*
(c) *viparyaya*
(d) *vikalpa*
(e) *nidrā*

7. What are the Three Vehicles of Buddhism? ***(Name all three)***

8. Which of the following features are unique to the higher mind rather than the lower mind? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) linkage with the senses
(b) proximity to Spirit
(c) reasoning capacity
(d) intuition
(e) direct connection with the right cerebral hemisphere

9. Which of the following professions rely on testimony (*āgama*). ***(Check one or more)***

(a) physics
(b) theology
(c) philosophy
(d) jurisprudence
(e) medicine
(f) psychiatry

10. Which of the following is a *form* of Yoga? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) Vedānta
(b) Jaina Yoga
(c) Buddhist Yoga
(d) Jnāna-Yoga
(e) Hindu Yoga

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 3
The Mystery of Spirit (Purusha)

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand Patanjali's conception of purusha (Spirit) and to learn about spiritual light and practice its visualization*

- What is Spirit?
- Inalienable Features of Purusha
- Purusha vs. Ātman
- The One and the Many
- The Lord, a Special Spirit
- Grace
- The Guru Question
- Om Recitation
- OM and AUM
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Mantra-Japa
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 3

WHAT IS SPIRIT?

purusha

Even though the term *spirit* does not adequately convey what Patanjali means by *purusha,* it is a convenient shorthand device nonetheless, for it does suggest something that is transcendental to the body and the mind. Curiously, the term *purusha* means as much as "man" or "person," but the reality for which it stands is not at all personal, and it certainly does not have a gender. The word *purusha* is first mentioned in the *Atharva-Veda* (10.2.28, 30), where it stands for the Cosmic Person, the Macranthropos, whose body is the universe as a whole. While the Vedānta tradition availed itself of the cognate term *ātman* to point to the transcendental Reality, the Sāmkhya-Yoga tradition opted for *purusha* as its technical term for Spirit but gave the word a meaning that is somewhat different from the one found in the *Rig-Veda*. Because by the time of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* this term was well-known in its metaphysical connotation, Patanjali did not feel the need to specifically define it. His work, however, contains two aphorisms that give us a better sense of how he understood it.

2.20: DRASHTĀ DRISHI-MĀTRAH SHUDDHO'PI PRATYAYA-ANUPASHYAH

"The Seer [which is] the sheer [power of] seeing, although pure, apperceives the ideas [in the mind]."

4.22: CITER APRATISAMKRAMĀYĀS TAD-ĀKĀRA-ĀPATTAU SVA-BUDDHI-SAMVEDANAM

"When the unchanging Awareness (*citi*) [seemingly] occurs (*āpatti*) in the form of that [i.e., a particular mind], experience of one's own (*sva*) cognitions [becomes possible]."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.20 and 4.22 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In 2.20, *shuddhah api* must be changed to *shuddho'pi.* In 4.22, *citeh* becomes *citer* owing to the following *a* sound, while *apratisamkramāyāh* becomes *apratisamkramāyās* because of the following *t* sound.

- Next read Chapter 2 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

Let's not confuse Spirit with spirits or ghosts! While yogins insist that spirits (disembodied entities) exist, these are far from transcendental. Like you and me, spirits belong to one or the other level of the Cosmos.

INALIENABLE FEATURES OF PURUSHA

From the *Yoga-Sūtra* as a whole we can infer the following characteristics for Patanjali's notion of *purusha*:

1. It is pure Awareness.
2. It is absolutely independent of cosmic existence (*prakriti*) but at the same time is strangely associated with it by way of a correlation (*samyoga*) that depends entirely on spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*).
3. The above implies that it is beyond space and time.
4. It is unchanging, which stands in stark contrast to the continuously self-transforming *prakriti.*
5. Because it is transcendental to the mind, it also has no karmic seeds in it and therefore is free from suffering (*duhkha*).
6. It can be "realized" upon the complete dissolution of the mind (*citta*), but "glimpses" of it are possible in states of ecstasy when the lower activities (*vritti*) of the mind are suspended and the higher mind (*buddhi*) has achieved a high degree of purity (*sattva-shuddhi*) and resembles a highly polished mirror that faithfully reflects what is in front of it.
7. Like *prakriti,* it is an eternal principle.

In addition, we can glean from the Sanskrit commentaries that Patanjali believed in the existence of multiple *purushas,* one for each natural mind, that is, a mind not artificially created by advanced adepts who possess paranormal abilities. This ability, according to the traditional authorities, is hinted at in aphorism 4.2 (see Lesson 4), though, as I will explain in Lesson 13 (p. 284), I personally disagree with this parapsychological interpretation of what appears to be a metaphysical *sūtra.*

The *Sāmkhya-Sūtra* (1.66ff.) ascribed to Sage Kapila contains a number of ontological "proofs" for the existence of *purusha*, none of which are particularly convincing to the critical mind, however. For instance, what do *you* make of the notion that because *prakriti* has many parts, it must exist for the sake of another, namely Spirit?

See whether you can deduce other features for *purusha* from Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra*. You could even use this topic for one of your essays for this course. (The essays are not to be submitted until Lesson 16, however!)

Don't rush through the course!
Make your studying a yogic practice.

PURUSHA VS. ĀTMAN

The question is whether *purusha* and *ātman* refer to the same Ultimate Reality or whether these two distinct designations imply that the "thing" to which they refer is also distinct?

Also, we know from Patanjali that the transcendental Subject (*purusha*) is not actually connected to cosmic existence. Its link to the universe is one of correlation (*samyoga*), which ceases the moment the mind is utterly purified.

How must we think of the transcendental Self (*ātman*) in relation to the world?

◘ Now read the following article entitled "The One and the Many."

THE ONE AND THE MANY
by Georg Feuerstein

Cosmological speculations in India date back to the later portion of the *Rig-Veda* and the *Atharva-Veda*. Both scriptures are replete with cosmogonic and theogonic materials. These early reflections—partly metaphysical and partly mythological—formed the stepping-stone of the great philosophical quest of the Upanishadic sages. The pivotal problem implicit in their endeavors to arrive at an understanding of the nature and origin of the universe was that of the relation between the One and the Many, the Infinite and the Finite.

On the one hand there is the singular ultimate Reality (*eka*), verified in rare states of spiritual exaltation and consolidated by profound reasoning, and on the other hand there is the impinging reality of multiplicity in everyday experience. What is their relationship? Can there be any relationship between them at all?

Out of this concern arose the philosophical theories of causation of later times, such as the Sāmkhya system's *parināma-vāda* (the view that the changes within cosmic existence are real) and Advaita Vedānta's *vivarta-vāda* (the view that the phenomenal world is illusory). How did the Upanishadic thinkers approach this fundamental issue of all types of mysticism? In what terms did they couch their solutions? It is these two questions which I shall try to answer, if only tentatively, in this essay.

It should be emphasized at the outset that there is no uniformity either in the treatment or in the proposed solution of this problem in the *Upanishads*. The statements range from purely mythological and allegoric utterances to genuine philosophical formulations. The latter are by far the rarer of the two types of statement, and the majority is a conglomeration of both.

The mythological-allegoric procedure is exemplified in the following passage from the *Brihad-*

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Āranyaka-Upanishad (1.2.1ff):

> There was nothing whatsoever here in the beginning. This [i.e., what is now the universe] was concealed by death, [or] by hunger; for hunger is death. That produced the mind [which willed]: "Let me become embodied."

Death signifies here the nonexistent, which is not the same as the negation of being; it is rather no-thing-ness—that super-sensuous "entity" which is the ground of everything that populates the spatio-temporal universe. It implies a sense of positiveness, just as hunger is not merely the absence of nourishment, or death the absence of life. This view of creation is repeated in other passages of the same text and also in other *Upanishads*, as for instance the *Chāndogya-Upanishad* (3.12.1-2):

> In the beginning this [world] was nonexistent (*asat*). [Thereafter] that was existent. It grew. It turned into an egg. It lay for the period of a year. [Then] it burst open. From the egg-shell emerged a [part] of silver and a [part] of gold. That which was of silver is this Earth. That which was of gold is Heaven. . . [1]

This view was criticized by Uddālaka Aruni, who was one of the two leading authorities in the early Upanishadic era, the other being Yâjnavalkya. Uddālaka Aruni affirms (*Chāndogya-Upanishad* 6.2.1) that in the beginning there was Being (*sat*), "one only without a second" (*ekam eva advitīyam*). Uddālaka then asks his philosophical disputant how an existing thing can arise out of nothing. Yet his rebuke of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the concept of *asat,* which is used only in contradistinction to *sat* but does not signify the total negation of being. It stands rather for pure potentiality.

A striking mythological account of the origin of the universe is given in the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (1.4.1ff):

> In the beginning this [universe] was a kind of person (*purusha-vidha*). Looking around, he saw nothing but himself. He first uttered: "I am he." Thus the designation "I" arose. Hence even today when addressed, one says "this is I" . . . (1)
>
> He verily was not happy. Hence once who is alone is not happy. He wished for a second. He became as large as a man and woman in intimate embrace. He divided this entity (*ātman*) into two. From that originated husband and wife. . . . He became united with her. From this human beings were born. (3)

This is an archaic model found in the cosmogonies of many non-Indian peoples as well.

The first chapter of the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* is evidently composed, to a large extent, of a collection of several fragmentary cosmogonies of a predominantly mythological character. These intimate a mystical knowledge of the ground of creation. Some represent a first attempt to formulate the Intangible. But the language is nowhere precise, categorical or definitive. The descriptive and allusive element prevails, as in the *Chāndogya-Upanishad* (1.4.11):

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> In the beginning this [world] was *brahman*, one only. That, being one, did not flourish . . . [Therefore it created the four social orders.]
>
> And again in 1.4.17:
>
> In the beginning this [world] was but the Self (*ātman*), one only. . .

Ātman is *brahman* seen within the person. *Brahman* is *ātman* seen within the world. Their identity is the celebrated notion of the mystical philosophy of the *Upanishads*. The substratum of the universe and the essence of man coincide. The pioneering Indologist Paul Deussen remarked on this: "This idea alone secures to the Upanishads an importance reaching far beyond their land and time . . ."[2] This pre-temporal undifferentiated continuum is characterized as the origin or birth-place of the world of name and form, that is, of the mental and physical objects.

The question arises: What is the ontological status of the world? Is the creation real or illusory? What seems implied in all passages without exception is that whatever has emerged from, or has been emanated by, the ultimate Reality is itself real. The world is not a mere phantom or a mental projection. It really is "out there." Deussen, well known for his monistic bias, was absolutely wrong when, for example, he said with reference to the *Katha-Upanishad* (3.1): ". . .where the two, God and the soul are contracted as light and shadow, which intimates that the latter has no reality of its own."[3] But the world is real. This basic contention is implied in the doctrine of the two forms of *brahman* announced in the second chapter of the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (see 2.3.1ff). The one form is the eternal, formless world-ground/soul-ground, and the other is the finite universe woven by space and time. This view is also implied, for instance, in the following passage of the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (2.1.20):

> As a spider moves up the thread, as small sparks emit from the fire—even so from this Self are emitted all the life forces, all the world, all deities [and] all beings.
>
> Compare this with the *Mundaka-Upanishad* (1.1.7):
>
> As a spider issues and withdraws [its threads], as herbs spring up from the earth, as head-hair (*kesha*) and body-hair (*loman*) [grows] from a living person—so from the Imperishable (*akshara*) arises here the world.
>
> This view is given explicit expression in *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 2.5.18:
>
> There is nothing that is not covered by him [i.e. the Supreme Person], nothing that is not pervaded by him.

Brahman is the source and persistent substratum of everything there is. It is omnipresent in all temporal things. It is the Whole that comprises both transcendence and immanence (see *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 5.2.1). It is greater than the world (see *Chāndogya-Upanishad* 3.11.6). All creatures are said to be

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merely one fourth of the Supreme Person (see *Chāndogya-Upanishad* 3.13.6), whilst its other three-quarters are immortal. It is *sat* and *tyat*, or the existent and the beyond (see *Taittirīya-Upanishad* 2.6.1.). It is both the undifferentiated or *avyâkrita* (see *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 1.4.7) and the universe differentiated by name and form.

Brahman with form, or the sensory world arising out of the formless ground, is also referred to as *ātmā vaishvānara* or "mundane Self" in the *Chāndogya-Upanishad* (5.12.ff.). The sky is said to be its head (5.12.2), the sun its eye (5.13.2), air its life force (5.14.2), space its body (5.15.2), water its bladder (5.16.2) and earth its feet (5.17.2).

What is implied in all these archaic cosmogonies is the self-division or self-multiplication of the Absolute. The one homogeneous Reality "visualized"—the word *aikshata* is customarily translated with "it thought" but the choice of words is surely not accidental and without deeper meaning—"May I be many" (*bahu syām,* see *Chāndogya-Upanishad* 6.2.3). This is repeated *verbatim* in the *Taittirīya-Upanishad* (2.6.1). This concept of self-duplication is also expressed in terms of self-sacrifice, as for instance in the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (1.1) where the process of world creation is likened to the old-established horse sacrifice (*ashva-medha*). The Creator's self-sacrifice serves as a model for all sacrifices on the human level.

But to return to the question of the reality or illusoriness of the created universe: The clearest exposition of this principal tenet of the *Upanishads* is by Uddālaka Aruni, in whom the German Indologist Walter Ruben saw the original ancestor of the Sāmkhya tradition, because he was the first to formulate the doctrine of causation peculiar to all Sāmkhya schools.[4] The following words are ascribed to him (see *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 6.4-6):

> Just as, my friend, all that is made of earth should be known by a single lump of earth, the modification (*vikāra*) being a [mere] name based on language, [whilst] it is just earth in truth.
>
> Just as, my friend, all that is made of gold should be known by a single nugget of gold. . .
>
> Just as, my friend, all that is made of iron should be known by a single pair of nail scissors. . .

Although the various modifications (*vikāra*) of the same primary "substance" are said to be based on linguistic convention (*vācā-ārambhana*), this does not imply that the universe is a purely mental construct without any actual existence outside the mind. On the contrary, the implicit assumption is always that the real gives birth to the real. This is the most blatant refutation of *māyā-vāda* (the view that the world is illusory). One can safely affirm that the concept of *mâyâ* in the sense of "illusoriness" is foreign to the older *Upanishads*. Uddālaka's dictum that all things "have Being as their root, Being as their abode, Being as their support" (*Chāndogya-Upanishad* 6.8.6) is shared by all Upanishadic thinkers of the older generation of which we have knowledge.

This basic contention is also accepted by Yājnavalkya whom Ruben styled an "idealist." Although there is admittedly a difference in approach to Uddālaka, we must regard this as a result of the distinct

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intellectual temperament of these two great thinkers. Uddālaka is inclined to define *brahman* more in terms of its world immanence, whereas Yājnavalkya, who is actually the more impressive of the two, tends toward a negativistic approach; he refuses to describe the Absolute, as his standard phrase in reply to all kinds of positive attributions indicates: *neti, neti* or "not thus, not thus." However, neither thinker denies the existence of the world and the appellations "idealist" or "realist" seem arbitrary.

Brahman and world are of the same ontological status in that both are equally real, but they differ profoundly in their metaphysical significance. *Brahman* ranks highest in the hierarchy of values. It alone is the supreme value; all else is *ārta* or "fallen" or "afflicted." Hence human beings are exhorted to strive for the realization of this ultimate good.

In the older prose *Upanishads, brahman* is understood as an impersonal force that creates, sustains, and (in the role of *antaryamin* or "innate controllers") mysteriously guides and impels human beings as it does the course of the rivers, luminaries, and the seasons (see *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 2.8.9). This view changes with the metric *Upanishads,* such as the *Katha, Mundaka,* and *Shvetāshvatara,* which introduce the personal aspect: *brahman* as God or Lord (*īsha*). The *Kena-Upanishad* is positioned between both viewpoints, as is evident from its introductory stanza:

> By whom (*kena*) willed and directed does the mind light on its objects? By whom commanded does life the first, move? At whose will do [people] utter this speech? And what god is it who prompts the eye and the ear?

A similar transitional position is occupied by the *Īsha-Upanishad,* according to which the Supreme Being is intrinsic and extrinsic to everything (stanza 5):

> It moves and it moves not; it is far and it is near.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan remarked on this:

> These apparently contradictory statements are not suggestive of the mental unbalance of the writer. He is struggling to describe what he experiences through the limitations of human thought and language. The Supreme is beyond the categories of thought . . . It is all that is in time and yet is beyond time.[5]

A further progression toward a theistic conception of the Ultimate Reality can be seen in the *Katha-Upanishad*. It speaks of the Self as lord-of-the-chariot (*rathin*) seated in the chariot (*ratha*), which is the body. The wisdom-faculty (*buddhi*) is the charioteer, the mind (*manas*) the reins (see *Katha-Upanishad* 1.3.3). The senses (*indriya*) are the horses, the sense objects (*vishaya*) the paths (see 1.3.4). *Brahman* is the lord of what has been and what will be (*īshanam bhūta-bhavasya,* 2.1.5). It is the "one controller" (*eko vashī*, 2.2.12), a phrase that is repeated in the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* (6.12).

Very significant are the words *yo vidadhāti kāmān*, "who fulfills the desires [of many]" (*Katha-Upanishad* 2.2.13). This is corroborated by another stanza in which the Self is depicted as "shaping desire after desire" (*kāmam kāmam purusho nirmimānah,* 2.2.8). This refers to its function as impeller, without which

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continuously guided by the inscrutable will of God.

> Out of fear of him, fire burns.
> Out of fear, the Sun burns. . .(2.3.3).

The universe is contingent on the Supreme Being. As an effluence of the Divine it has no autonomy but derives its teleology entirely from God.

This brings us to the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad,* which is the culmination of the theistic current in the *Upanishads*. The secret doctrine of the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* is prefaced by a review and simultaneous refutation of various doctrines, current in ancient India, about the nature of *brahman*. Eight such theories are mentioned:

(1) kāla—time
(2) svabhāva—entelechy
(3) niyati—destiny
(4) yadricchā—coincidence
(5) *bhūtāni*—material elements
(5) yoni—primal source (= *prakriti*)
(6) purusha—transcendental subject
(7) samyoga eshām—a combination of the above.

None of these proposed causes is considered sufficient. The author of the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* comes forward with his own doctrine of the "creative-power innate in the Divine" (*deva-ātma-shakti*), "hidden in its own qualities" (*sva-gunair nigūdhām*). By "qualities" are meant either the three *gunas* of Sâmkhya ontology (referred to in 5.7), or, as Shankara suggests, the trinity of world-ground (*prakriti*), soul-ground (*purusha*) and Lord (*īshvara*).

The Divine is regarded as the creative matrix of everything, and at the same time as the Wholly Other:

> He envelops the world on all sides and stands ten fingers' breadth beyond. (3.14)

He is the stimulator (*savitri,* 2.1), ruler (*īshana,* 3.11), lord (*prabhu,* 3.11), omnipresent (*sarva-gata,* 3.11) and singular (3.2; 4.1). It is said of him that he is

> . . . the One who spreads the net, who rules with his ruling, who rules all the world with his ruling (*īshata īshanibhih*). (3.1)

He is the all-maker (*vishva-krit*), the all-knower (*vishva-vid*), self-originated (*ātma-yoni*), the author of time (*kāla-kāra*), the possessor-of-qualities (*gunin*), the knower of everything (*sarva-vid*), the ruler (*pati*) of the world-ground (*pradhāna*) and the field-knower (*kshetra-jna,* i.e., the Self), the lord of the primary-constituents (*guna-īsha*), the cause (*hetu*) of phenomenal existence (*samsāra*), emancipation (*moksha*), continuance (*sthiti*), and bondage (*bandha*) (see 6.16). He is Hara (1.10), Rudra (3.2) or Shiva (3.11)—and no longer the impersonal force of the older *Upanishads*. He can be addressed in prayer (see 3.5-6), and it is

Continued on next page

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possible to establish a personal relation with him:

> May He endow us with auspicious understanding. (*sa no buddhyā subhayā samyunaktu,* 4.1)

In *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* 3.20, the doctrine of grace (*prasāda*) is for the first time clearly enunciated.[6] Shankara, the arch-nondualist, tried to explain away the obvious meaning of *dhātuh prasādāt* ("through the grace of the creator") by reconstructing the Sanskrit text to *dhātu-prasādāt* ("through the tranquility of the senses"). However, this amendation is both unnecessary and unjustified. Nowhere does this become more evident than in the concluding verse (6.23), which epitomizes the spirit of the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* beautifully when it admonishes the initiate to cultivate "supreme love" (*para-bhakti*) for God. This is in fact the first occurrence of the term *bhakti* in the *Upanishads*. Grace and devotion to God are interrelated and together replace the earlier meditation on the impersonal *brahman*.

The theism of the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* comes to full bloom in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which, if we can believe the colophon, is actually an *Upanishad* pertaining to the tradition of Vaishnavism (the God-man Krishna featured in the *Gītā* being an incarnation of Vishnu). Now the way was paved for the great religious movements of medieval Hinduism and their various theological and cosmogonic models.

NOTES

1. There is an interesting passage in the *Taittirîya-Upanishad* (2.6.1) where it is said that those who know *brahman* as unreal (*asat*) become themselves unreal, whereas those who know it as real (*sat*) become themselves real. The implied meaning seems to be that the mind leads either to emancipation or to bondage according to what notion it attaches itself.

2. P. Deussen and G. A. Jacob, *The Philosophy of the Vedānta and the Vedāntasāra* (Calcutta, 1957), p. 11.

3. Ibid., p. 13.

4. See W. Ruben, *Die Philosophen der Upanischaden* (Bern, 1947), pp. 156ff.

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniûads* (London, 1953), p. 571.

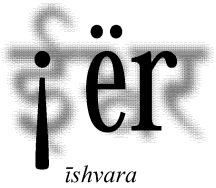
6. See also 4.21 and cf. *Katha-Upanishad* 2.1.23.

STUDY NOTE

The preceding essay is on the technical side, but if you take the time to plow through it, you will learn a great deal about nondualist Hindu metaphysics, which makes a valuable counterpoint to Patanjali's dualistic system. Perhaps some of the theistic notions mentioned in the essay will hold appeal for you. We will study Patanjali's notion of *īshvara* ("Lord") next. One of the insights you may gain by studying the above essay is that because the Ultimate Reality is essentially beyond the mind, it lends itself to numerous interpretations, none of which is entirely satisfactory. In any case, don't worry if you don't immediately understand everything; focus on the essentials.

THE LORD, A SPECIAL SPIRIT

Patanjali's metaphysical system has been described as dualistic, but strictly speaking it recognizes three ultimate principles: To Spirit (*purusha*) and Cosmos (*prakriti*), we must add "the Lord" (*īshvara*), who admittedly belongs to the unchanging and featureless dimension of Spirit. Here is Patanjali's explanation:



īshvara

1.23: ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNĀD VĀ

"Or [ecstasy is gained] through devotion to the Lord."

1.24: KLESHA-KARMA-VIPĀKA-ĀSHAYAIR APARĀMRISHTAH PURUSHA-VISHESHA ĪSHVARAH

"The Lord is a special Spirit, untouched by the causes-of-affliction, action, [its] fruition, [and] the [karmic] deposits [in the depth of the mind.]"

1.25: TATRA NIRATISHAYAM SARVA-JNA-BĪJAM

"In Him the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed."

1.26: PŪRVESHĀM API GURUH KĀLENA ANAVACCHEDĀT

"[The Lord] was also the mentor of the earlier [yogins] by virtue of [His] temporal continuity."

1.27: TASYA VĀCAKAH PRANAVAH

"His symbol is the humming-sound [i.e., the sacred syllable *OM*]."

1.28: TAJ-JAPAS TAD-ARTHA-BHĀVANAM

"The recitation of that [sacred syllable] [leads to] the contemplation/realization of its meaning."

Although the Lord is Spirit (*purusha*), he is a special kind of transcendental Ultimate. In contrast to the other *purushas,* the Lord has never been—and will never be—in any way associated with the illusion of having a body-mind and the inevitable karma and suffering arising from this misconception. It is easy to punch holes into Patanjali's argument: Spirit, which is by definition transmental, can never ever be subject

to illusion. This is true of all "regular" *purushas* as well. In fact, Spirit is never not liberated. The whole drama of liberation is enacted only by a finite being, who deems himself or herself trapped in the Cosmos. Spirit is the same before and after the "nonevent" of liberation. Remember: Spirit is unchanging.

Why, then, did Patanjali formulate such an illogical philosophical position? That great Yoga master was primarily interested in furnishing a practical way to liberation and only secondarily in metaphysical theorizing. From a *practical* viewpoint, the practitioner does indeed experience himself or herself as a subject that is separate from everything else. Thus it makes *practical* sense to think of each individual having a *purusha,* a unique center of Awareness. From the same perspective, it also makes at least some sense to speak of a *purusha*—the Lord—who has never been associated with a finite body-mind. Dozens of metaphysical systems from around the world have in fact adopted this particular (theistic) way of looking at things. Historically, it would appear that the Lord corresponds to a particular type or quality of experience on the yogic path, which Patanjali recognized. Perhaps, he simply wanted to acknowledge the fact that many schools of Yoga lean toward theism, notably Bhakti-Yoga, which forms a whole branch of the tree of Yoga. Of course, in order to benefit from his exposition in the *Yoga-Sūtra,* we do not need to accept lock, stock, and barrel all of Patanjali's philosophical notions.

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.23–28 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Grammatically, in 1.24, *ashayaih* becomes *ashayair* because of the following *a* sound, while the *visarga* (*ḥ*) of *visheshah* must be dropped because of the following *ī* sound. In 1.28, *tad japah tad* becomes *taj japas tat* again for euphonic reasons. When reading aphorism 1.28, you will notice that in this manual, I have rendered the term *bhāvana* as "contemplation/realization," because it could have either connotation in the *Yoga-Sūtra.* To capture both meanings, it would also be possible to translate the term as "contemplative realization."

GRACE

The practical relevance of the *īshvara* concept lies in that the Lord can, at least for yogins, be an agent of grace. How, you may ask, can an utterly transcendental Being, have any influence in the finite realm? Do not expect a plausible (or in fact any) answer from Patanjali to this vital question. But then generations of Christian, Jewish, or Muslim theologians also have failed to provide a satisfactory answer. It seems that when it comes to the God concept, we must resort to faith.

Judging from aphorism 1.23, Patanjali appears to have considered devotion to the Lord (*īshvara-pranidhāna*) as optional, because he prefixed his statement with "or." Yet, according to what I call the *ashta-anga-yoga* part of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* devotion to the Lord is listed (see 2.32) as an integral aspect of the restraints (*niyama*). This is rather puzzling, but it supports my view that Patanjali's work is composed of two major and apparently somewhat poorly integrated parts: the *kriyā-yoga* section and the *ashta-anga-yoga* section (see my comments in Lesson 2).

Īshvara-pranidhāna, here loosely rendered as "devotion to the Lord," is something like a positive regard for the Lord, which keeps the practitioner's mind open to the Lord's metaphysical influence. In the

Yoga-Bhāshya (1.25), we find the following explanation:

> Although he [i.e., the Lord] has no [feeling of] self-gratification, his motive is the gratification (*anugraha*) of beings: "By instruction in knowledge and virtue, at the dissolution [of the world at the end of] an eon (*kalpa*) [or, alternatively,] at the great dissolution [of the entire unvierse], I will uplift the Spirits (*purusha*) [immersed] in the world." And likewise it has been said: "The first knower [i.e., Kapila], the exalted supreme seer, assuming a created mind out of compassion, declared this teaching to Āsuri, who desired to know."

Kapila

Angh

anugraha

psad

prasāda

We cannot fail to notice that the above explanation entails a certain degree of anthropomorphization, which is fine as long as we are aware that we are indulging in this sort of metaphorical language. Be that as it may, many Yoga authorities agree that when we open our mind and heart to the spiritual dimension—the Transcendental Being—we create the possibility for a special "communication," which is known as "grace." Grace (*anugraha, prasāda*) plays a major role in theistic schools of Yoga such as the various schools of Bhakti-Yoga, the Yoga of devotional self-surrender.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* (2.45) informs us that by means of devotion to the Lord, we can make progress in our practice to the point of attaining the ecstatic state (*samādhi*).

2.45: SAMĀDHI-SIDDHIR ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNĀT

"Through devotion to the Lord [comes about] the attainment of ecstasy."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.45 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: *Siddhih* becomes *siddhir* because of the following *ī* sound. In my book, I am using the neologism "enstasy" for the more familiar "ecstasy." Some time ago, I stopped using the former term, mainly because it failed to catch on outside the academic literature.

- Next read Essay #31 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapter 27 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

***Īshvara* is not a guardian angel, as one "translator" would have it. The Lord does not belong to any of the many realms of the Cosmos.**

THE GURU QUESTION

Aphorism 1.26 speaks of the Lord as the first *guru,* which we can understand in the context of Hinduism as a declaration that all spiritual teachings commence with revelation (*shruti*). In other words, when we go back far enough, we see not a clever human mind inventing teachings but an open human mind receiving inspiration "from on high." In the state of ecstasy, we can tap into the transcendental Reality, and whatever ideas crystallize in this rarefied mental atmosphere (replete with *sattva*) has the quality of revelatory truth. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (4.7), for instance, the God-man Krishna tells his disciple Prince Arjuna that, eon after eon, he has revealed essentially the same yogic teachings, which then, in the hands of our flawed humanity, become gradually perverted and in need of renewed restoration.

Image from an Indian TV series on the Mahābhārata

As long as the revealed teachings are faithfully transmitted from teacher to disciple, they will retain their original value and potency. Therefore all traditions are eager to preserve the purity of their respective teachings by following the time-honored tradition of oral transmission from *guru* to *shishya*—teacher to disciple—in the course of a legitimate and authentic discipleship. All true Yoga is therefore initiatory, with each link in a given lineage having the sacred obligation to honor the teachings and pass them to the next generation of spiritual practitioners with the utmost fidelity.

gä

guru

Thus the teacher is all-important, and a realized master is seen as a living source of revealed wisdom, a replica of the original divine teacher. Not surprisingly, in all yogic schools the teacher is regarded as pivotal. If Patanjali did not include any aphorisms relating to the *guru,* this was only because he took the role of the *guru* on the spiritual path for granted. He undoubtedly shared the view of other great teachers that the *guru* is the disciple's most immediate wellspring of grace.

I will deal with the figure of the *guru* in more detail in Lesson 6.

Only the knowledge that comes from the mouth of the *guru* is alive. Other kinds [of knowledge] are barren, powerless, and the cause of suffering.

—*Shiva-Samhitā* 3.1

OM RECITATION

omkāra-japa, recitation of the syllable OM

The sacred Sanskrit syllable OM, which is said to be the symbol of the Lord, has a long history extending back to the *Rig-Veda.* It came to be widely used not only in Hinduism but also in Buddhism and Jainism. It is generally regarded as the primordial sound that reverberates throughout space and time at the most subtle level of cosmic existence. Curiously, mathematically based synthesized recordings of cosmic background radition (the "sound" of the Big Bang) vividly remind s one of the cosmic OM sound (see the work by John G. Kramer, a professor of physics at the University of Washington; sound samples can be found online at *http://faculty.washington.edu/jcramer/BBSound.html*).

An entire yogic "science"—Mantra-Yoga—has been developed around the discovery that sound has a profound effect on the human nervous system. The great sages and seers of India have "heard" many internal sounds (called *mantra*) that they identified as being particularly efficient in focusing the mind on its inner environment. Thus *mantras* are like keys to the inner sanctum of the mind where the miracle of self-transformation can happen.

The mindful recitation of a *mantra,* which is called *japa* ("muttering"), gradually produces a meditative state that may ripen into full-fledged ecstasy (*samādhi*) whereupon the living meaning of the *mantra* is revealed directly.

Traditionally, the *omkāra,* or "OM-maker," is regarded as an antidote to the *ahamkāra,* or "I-maker," that is, the ego by which we turn everything into an object outside of our presumed subjective identity. The OM-maker unifies our consciousness and thus opens up the transcendental "space" of Awareness. That is to say, as a genuine yogic method, it gives us access to Spirit, the transcendental Self.

◘ Now read Essays #65 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNA

In explaining the practice of *īshvara-pranidhāna,* Vyāsa in his *Yoga-Bhāshya* (1.23) commentary explains that it consists in offering up all one's actions to the Supreme Teacher (i.e., the Lord), which implies that one renounces any expectation of reward. This clearly connects with the teaching found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* authored at least a millennium before the *Yoga-Bhāshya.*

OM and AUM

The OM-sound is traditionally explained as being constituted of A + U + M + the resonant after-sound (called *anusvāra*): AUMMMMMmmm. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* (17.23–24) states:

> *OM TAT SAT.* This is known as the triple designation of the Absolute (*brahman*). By this were ordained of old the Brahmins, the *Vedas,* and the [ritual] sacrifices.
>
> Therefore uttering OM, the expounders of the Absolute always perform the acts of sacrifice, asceticism, and generosity, [as] stipulated by ordinance.

The *Mundaka-Upanishad* (2.4) has this to say:

> The *pranava* [i.e., the *om* sound] is the bow. Oneself, verily, is the arrow. The Absolute is said to be the target of that [arrow]. It must be pierced attentively. Like the arrow, one must become one with That (*tan-mayo bhavet*).

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Arya, Usharbudh. *Mantra & Meditation.* Honesdale, Penn.: Himalayan International Institute, 1981.

Beck, Guy L. *Sonic Absolute: Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

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Caplan, Mariana. *Do You Need a Guru? Understanding the Student-Teacher Relationship in an Era of False Prophets.* London: Thorsons, 2002.

Prem, Krishna. *The Yoga of the Bhagavat Gita.* Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1973.

Sivananda, Swami. *Guru and Disciple.* Rishikesh, India: Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, 1955.

_____. *Japa Yoga: A Comprehensive Treatise on Mantra Śāstra.* Shivanandanagar, India: Divine Life Society, 1986.

Suggested Yoga Practice

MANTRA-JAPA

1. Sit quietly in your favorite meditation posture or in a comfortable chair and mentally commit to reciting aloud and attentively the syllable OM for the next 10 minutes. If you have a crackly voice that would not allow you to set up a pleasing resonant vibration in your body, you might want to whisper the OM/AUM sound to yourself or, if your concentration is reasonably good, even to recite the *pranava* mentally only. Preferrably, though, the recitation should create a beautiful vibration. Whispered (*upāmshu*) and mental (*mānasa*) recitation are generally recommended at more advanced levels of practice, because they call for greater mental focusing. You may also alternate between audible, whispered, and mental recitation to avoid monotony, which can prove a handicap for beginners.

2. First take a few deep breaths and relax. Then focus your mind on the transcendental Reality (if you have faith in its existence), on your own ideal of spiritual growth, or simply on your intent to allow the present exercise to instruct you.

3. Inhale deeply but without straining and upon exhalation slowly recite the syllable AUM. Feel the A-sound originating in your chest at the level of the heart, with the U-sound manifesting in the throat, followed by the M-sound in the head. The emphasis should be on the M-sound and its extension as the *anusvāra.* Especially feel the vibration of the *anusvāra* (the prolonged echo of MMMMMMMmmm) as it spreads from the middle of the head to the crown and even beyond, reaching into the infinite space above the head. Allow the sound to ebb away as your breath softly runs out. The breathing must not be forced, and the recitation should be easeful and pleasurable.

4. After you have acquired some skill in reciting the AUM-sound, you may want to add the following additional element: At the conclusion of each repetition of this *mantra,* when the breath has ebbed away and the *anusvāra* has become inaudible, visualize that the sound vibration is transmuted into light infinitely above your head. Continue to breathe softly while maintaining this visualization for, say, 10–20 seconds or longer if you find it easy to do. Then go on to take the next breath and begin the next repetition.

5. I recommend that you do this exercise, if possible, every day for a week or longer if you find it enjoyable and meaningful.

For Reflection

1. Do you believe that there is an utterly transcendental aspect to human life, such as Spirit, Self, or God? How did you acquire this belief, or, if you do not entertain this idea, why not? In considering this matter, bear in mind the nature of evidence you have or would need to be convinced. If you are skeptical, would you find the testimony of a great master sufficient? Or would you have to have immediate proof yourself?

2. Most people entertain all kinds of metaphysical beliefs without, however, having thought about them deeply enough. How did you arrive at your own metaphysical notions? What role did your family environment, education, and larger culture play in the development of your personal belief system? Do you consider it important that one's beliefs should be rationally sound?

3. Have you ever had an experience that seemed to you to be an instance of grace, such as a sudden and inexplicable improvement in a really bad situation? Did you interpret it as "divine intervention" or just "good luck"? What, if any, are the advantages or drawbacks in availing oneself of either explanation?

4. How do you feel about the fact that some of Patanjali's metaphysical notions seem awkward or even implausible and that there are so many ways of explaining "ultimate" facts? Does this make you feel uneasy or strangely liberating? Do you think it is important to have "final" answers to the Big Questions? Or do you find it fine to adopt working hypotheses? Do you think it is possible to have no spiritual beliefs at all (agnosticism)?

5. When, in your opinion, does Patanjali cross the fine line between spirituality and religion? Do you regard his notion of *īshvara* as a religious or a philosophical idea? What about his notion of *purusha*? Do you think these ideas are purely speculative, or could they be based in yogic experiences and realizations?

6. In your view, would it be possible to practice Patanjali's Yoga without reference to any of his metaphysical ideas or are they integral to his practical program of self-purification and self-transcendence to the point of liberation?

7. How could one practice *īshvara-pranidhāna* in a contemporary context? How could an agnostic student of Yoga still practice it? If *īshvara* is not your "ultimate concern," what is? ("Ultimate concern" is what Protestant theologian Paul Tillich called a person's most significant aspiration—be it God, the happiness of one's child, or the accumulation of wealth.)

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

8. Are you more of an idealist or a realist? Do you think one's life should be guided by the highest ideal or ideals possible? Or should we simply make the most of what is arising before us? Or should we seek a compromise between these two approaches?

9. How do you relate to authority and authority figures? Are you by nature compliant or rebellious, appeasing or opposing? What do you think about the role and function of the *guru* in India's spiritual traditions? Would your attitudes about authority prevent you from ever entering into a spiritual discipleship, which inevitably involves obedience to authority and artful self-surrender? Could or, if you have a *guru,* can you find a balance between mindful self-transcendence and self-actualization (the conscious realization of your mind's creative potential)? Or do you think that self-transcendence and self-actualization are mutually exclusive?

10. If you were to die today, what would you spend your last few hours doing? Would you immerse yourself in pleasurable experiences (all or at least some of the things you never got to do)? Or would you seek out a quiet spot and consciously prepare for the transition out of your physical body? Would you feel afraid (and if so of what)? Or would you even be somewhat excited about the next step in your adventure as a sentient being? Would the immediate prospect of death make you philosophical or upset?

11. Have you given much thought to the idea of immortality? Do you believe that our spiritual part is immortal? Do you think that physical immortality is a possibility, and if so, what would you be willing to do to realize it? If we have an immortal side to us, why do we waste so much time on things that are ephemeral?

12. Do you believe that we can discover Spirit on our own or do we need to have the help of others in whom Spirit is clearly present? In other words, are we capable of liberating ourselves? Or do we need a catalyst in the form of another person or divine grace? If so, what have you done about it?

QUESTIONNAIRE 3

(Please **submit** your answers to tyslearning@sasktel.net)

1. What is *purusha*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) a spirit entity
(b) transcendental Witness
(c) pure Awareness
(d) Cosmic Consciousness
(e) a mystical state
(f) Macranthropos
(g) inner controller (*antaryamin*)

2. How does *purusha* differ from *ātman*? The former is. . . *(Check one or more)*

(a) multiple
(b) a lesser ultimate
(c) attached to a specific personality
(d) absolutely the same as *ātman*
(e) the origin of the Cosmos (*prakriti*)
(f) the One (*eka*) beyond all phenomena

3. Where was the view that the world is illusory first taught? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *Rig-Veda*
(b) earliest *Upanishads*
(c) middle *Upanishads*
(d) Shankara's writings
(e) Sāmkhya scriptures

4. Which text clearly expounds the idea of divine grace for the first time? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *Atharva-Veda*
(b) *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad*
(c) *Sāmkhya-Sūtra*
(d) *Katha-Upanishad*
(e) *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad*
(f) *Yoga-Sūtra*

5. Why is *īshvara* said to be a "special" *purusha*? Because he . . . ***(Check one or more)***

(a) is insentient like *prakriti*
(b) free from karma
(c) longer lived than other *purushas*
(d) can grant his grace to *yogins*
(e) is immortal
(f) is eternally omniscient
(g) is untouched by the limitations of a body-mind

6. According to Patanjali, what is the successful outcome of devotion to the Lord? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) proximity to *īshvara*
(b) ecstasy
(c) divine love
(d) grace
(e) bliss

7. What are the two major functions of the *guru*? ***(Write two or more sentences)***

8. What is meant by "spiritual presence"? (*Write two or more sentences*)

9. How is it possible to still practice "devotion to the Lord" when one doesn't believe in Patanjali's version of God? ***(Write four or more sentence)***

10. What are your thoughts on self-effort vs. grace? ***(Write five or more sentences)***

11. How do you explain the fact that if Spirit (*purusha*) is eternal Awareness, we have every day the experience of deep sleep when we are not conscious of our surroundings? ***(Explain in five or more sentences)***

12. According to Patanjali, *buddhi* is part of cosmic existence (*prakriti*), which by definition lacks Awareness. If so, how can *buddhi* be called an "organ of wisdom"? ***(Explain in three or more sentences)***

13. What is the difference between Patanjali's *purusha* and Vedānta's *ātman*? ***(Explain in four or five sentences)***

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

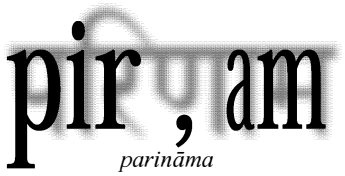
Lesson 4
The Cosmic Machine (Prakriti)

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand Patanjali's conception of the Cosmos (prakriti) and the body-mind and to boost self-observation by understanding the body in spiritual terms*

- Everything Is in Flux
- Holarchy: Coarse and Subtle Realms of Existence
- Cosmic Building Blocks: The Three Gunas
- The Body-Mind As a Machine
- Evolution / Involution
- What Exists Never Ceases to Be
- Yoga Is Disunion
- Correlation (Samyoga) and Leibniz
- "Sattvification"
- Is the Ego Real?
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Seeing Gunas Everywhere
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 4

EVERYTHING IS IN FLUX



parināma

"You cannot step into the same river twice," observed the sixth-century Ionian philosopher Heraclitus, though he managed to put this simple statement into rather more complicated words in Greek. Had Patanjali, who lived many centuries later, known about Heraclitus, he would undboutedly have agreed with him. That seminal thinker from the city of Ephesus also anticipated another key tenet of the metaphysics of Classical Yoga, namely that the world process, the ever-changing *prakriti,* is eternal and did not originate from a divine fiat. In other words, God (Patanjali's *īshvara*) has absolutely no creative function.

We can readily appreciate that everything is continuously shifting, variable, unstable, impermanent. We just need to look at our own body, which begins as a maternal ovum and paternal sperm, becomes an embryo, fetus, neonate, child, adolescent, and adult human only to undergo progressive decline, intermittent sickness, and eventual death. Our mind also is in constant flux. Thoughts are coming and going, attitudes are changing, feelings and emotions are rising and falling. Were it not for the illusive sense of self (ego), the mind's ever-changing nature would be obvious to us in every moment. In modification of Heraclitus' observation, we could say: You cannot step into the same mental stream twice.

Relentless change also marks our external environment: Animals and plants grow and die; seasons come and go; our planet is hurling through space in an ellipsis around the Sun, which, in turn, is speeding toward the constellation Sagittarius of our nebula, which is itself rotating and moving in an expanding and contracting universe. Everything from the subatomic particles to the largest astronomical configurations is in constant motion.

When we fully comprehend this picture, we cannot but be awe-struck and perhaps also experience a little fear, for we come to realize that our lives are built on quicksand and that we must not hope for lasting happiness within the finite world. Gautama the Buddha, one of the few fully realized masters, captured the situation well in his Three Marks (*tri-lakshana*) of conditioned existence (*samsāra*):

(a) suffering (*duhkha*)
(b) nonself (*anātman*)
(c) impermanence (*anitya*)

There is a great similarity between this Buddhist teaching and Patanjali's own appraisal of cosmic existence (*prakriti*). I will discuss this shortly. First I propose to focus on the notion that the Cosmos is governed by constant change, or transformation (*parināma*). Patanjali availed himself of the technical term *parināma* (lit. "excessive bending") in several aphorisms (see 2.15; 3.9, 11–13, 15–16; 4.2, 14, 32–33),*

*There is a word index to all the terms found in the *Yoga-Sūtra* at the back of my book *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali,* pp. 161–172, but the index is arranged according to the Sanskrit alphabet, which makes it a bit more challenging for those not familiar with Sanskrit.

but most significantly in considering the changes occurring in the meditative and ecstatic mind, as will be discussed in Lesson 15.

4.2: JĀTY-ANTARA-PARINĀMAH PRAKRITY-ĀPŪRĀT

"The transformation into another category-of-existence (*jāti*) [is made possible] by the superabundance of [the matrix of] the Cosmos."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 4.2 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: The terms *jāti* and *prakriti* must be changed to *jāty* and *prakrity* because of the following *a* sounds.

Confusingly, the technical term *prakriti* can stand for both the totality of cosmic existence and the transcendental matrix or "foundation" (*pradhāna*) of the Cosmos. Here, clearly, the latter connotation is intended: The transcendental, beginningless, and eternal ground of the Cosmos constantly pours forth realities (energies, things, and beings) at the various levels of cosmic existence—from the highest to the lowest. Thus, the Cosmos is incessantly creative, as well as destructive (because it also negates the very forms it has created).

4.3: NIMITTAM APRAYOJAKAM PRAKRITĪNĀM VARANA-BHEDAS TU TATAH KSHETRIKAVAT

"The incidental-cause (*nimitta*) does not initiate the processes-of-evolution but [merely] is responsible for] the singling-out of possibilities—like a farmer [who irrigates a field by selecting appropriate pathways for the water]."

4.4: NIRMĀNA-CITTĀNY ASMITĀ-MĀTRĀT

"The individualized minds [proceed] from the primary 'I-am-ness'."

4.5: PRAVRITTI-BHEDE PRAYOJAKAM CITTAM EKAM ANEKESHĀM

"[Although the many individualized minds are engaged] in distinct activities, the 'Single Mind' is the originator of [all] other [minds]."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.3–4.5 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: The term *cittāni* (plural of *citta*) must be changed to *cittāny* because of the following *a* sounds. I have here and elsewhere translated *citta* with "mind" rather than "consciousness," as in my book.

Over against the classical Sanskrit commentaries, which favor a psychological exegesis of the preceding aphorisms, I have adopted a metaphysical interpretation, which seems to make more sense from the context. Also, this allows us to move away from interpreting aphorism 4.2 as a paranormal ability rather than a profound philosophical statement. The following *sūtra* looks at the Cosmos (in the form of the mind) from a psychological-epistemological perspective. It seeks to answer the question: Since Spirit-Awareness is utterly transcendental, how is cognition even possible?

4.23: DRASHTRI-DRISHYA-UPARAKTAM CITTAM SARVA-ARTHAM

"[Provided that] the mind is colored by the 'Seer' and the 'Seen', [it can cognize] any object."

4.24: TAD-ASAMKHYEYA-VĀSANĀBHISH CITRAM API PARA-ARTHAM SAMHATYA-KĀRITVĀT

"That [mind], though speckled with countless subliminal-traits (*vāsanā*), is other-purposed due to [its being limited to] collaborate activity."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.23–4.24 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 4.24, the word *vāsanābhih* (instrumental case of plural *vāsanā*) must be changed to *vāsanābhish* because of the following *c* sound.

Even though the countless objects of the Cosmos seem to be solid and stable, they are actually what physicists call "standing waves." Patanjali says essentially the same thing in aphorism 4.14, which is discussed on p. 77. He also is eager to point out that these cosmic objects are not merely mind creations but actually exist in their own right. This important philosophical point is made in the following *sūtras.*

4.15: VASTU-SĀMYE CITTA-BHEDĀT TAYOR VIBHAKTAH PANTHĀH

"In view of the multiplicity of mind [as opposed] to the singleness of a [perceivable] object, both [belong to] separate 'paths' [i.e., levels of existence]."

4.16: NA CA EKA-CITTA-TANTRAM VASTU TAD-APRAMĀNAKAM TADĀ KIM SYĀT

"And the [perceivable] object is not dependent on a single mind; this is unprovable; besides, what could [such an imaginary object possibly] be?"

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.15–4.16 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 4.15, the word *tayoh* (genitive dual of *tad*) must be changed to *tayor* because of the following *v* sound. Some editions read *viviktah* for *vibhaktah,* the meaning of both terms being the same.

Since mind and object are separate things, how is cognition possible? Aphorism 4.23 speaks of the mind being "colored" (*uparakta*) by Awareness and the perceived object (*drishya*). In *sūtra* 4.15, Patanjali affirms that this kind of "coloration" (*uparāga*) is fundamental to the process of knowledge. Mind itself, he further states, is an object (*drishya*), because it is always noticed by the transcendental Awareness, which is Spirit itself. Awareness as such is the ultimate Knower.

4.17: TAD UPARĀGA-APEKSHITVĀC CITTASYA VASTU JNĀTA-AJNĀTAM

"An object is known or not known by reason of the required coloration of the mind by that [object]."

4.18: SADĀ JNĀTASH CITTA-VRITTAYAS TAT-PRABHOH PURUSHASYA APARINĀMITVĀT

"The fluctuations of the mind are always known by their 'superior,' because of Spirit's immutability."

4.19: NA TAT-SVA-ĀBHĀSAM DRISHYATVĀT

"That [mind] has no self-luminosity because of [its] object-character."

4.20: EKA-SAMAYE CA UBHAYA-ANAVADHĀRANAM

"And [this implies] the impossibility-of-cognizing both [mind and object] simultaneously."

4.21: CITTA-ANTARA-DRISHYE BUDDHI-BUDDHER ATIPRASANGAH SMRITI-SAMKARASH CA

If a mind [were] cognized by another [mind], [this would lead to an infinite] regress (*atiprasanga*) from cognition to cognition and to the confusion of memory."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.17–4.21 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In aphorism 4.17, the ablative *apekshitvāt* must be changed to *apekshitvac* because of the following *c* sound. Similarly in aphorism, 4.18, the nominative *jnātah* must be changed to *jnātash* because of the folloing *c* sound, while grammar demands that the plural nominative *vrittayah* be transformed into *vrittayas* owing to the following *t* sound. In aphorism 4.21, the genitive *buddheh* must be changed to *buddher* on account of the following *a* sound, while *samkarah* becomes *samkarash* because of the following *c* sound. Please note that *samkarah* ("confusion") is quite different from *samskāra* ("subliminal activator").

As explained in aphorism 4.22 (see Lesson 3), the transcendental Awareness is the final instance in the process of knowledge because it alone is immutable. Therefore, it cannot be known by anything else. Of course, the "knowledge" of Awareness is not what we ordinarily mean by knowledge. It is simple *Awaring*.

In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order.

—Carl Gustav Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* (1959)

HOLARCHY: COARSE AND SUBTLE REALMS OF EXISTENCE

prakriti

As the ancient Greek philosophers also maintained, Patanjali thinks of the world not as chaos but Cosmos, an orderly whole. *Prakriti,* in Patanjali's view, is a multilevel structure comprising our familiar coarse (material) realm and a number of subtle realms that are invisible to the eye and only visible to the mind's eye of a trained *yogin* or *yoginī*.

These realms stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other, with the material plane making up the "lowest" and the subtle, zero-dimensional realm of the eternal transcendental ground of the Cosmos (known as *prakriti-pradhāna*) forming the highest level of cosmic existence. Beyond the Cosmos, or the cosmic holarchy, is Spirit who/which is called "subtler than the subtlest" (*sūkshma-atisūkshmam*) in the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* (4.14).

Patanjali mentions the subtle realms in connection with his delineation of the various types of ecstasy (*samādhi*) and their respective objects (see aphorisms 1.44–45). These realms, which he calls "levels" (*parvan*) of cosmic existence, are relevant to us because, even though we are not directly aware of them, they constitute us and inform our everyday consciousness and experience. In addition, they are important because on our inner voyage to Spirit, we inevitably must pass through them during the meditative process of introversion (*pratyak-cetanā*).

Evidently, Patanjali (like other Yoga masters) thought of the Cosmos as a *psychophysical* Cosmos, which combines both material and immaterial (psychomental) realities—a very important point. The Cosmos we inhabit is not merely material, but matter is viewed as a grosser condensate arising from the same substance, which itself is transcendental (i.e., the *prakriti*).

Like the *purusha,* the Cosmos (*prakriti*)—or Nature in the most comprehensive sense of the term—has existed from beginningless time (see aphorism 4.10) but unlike the *purusha,* it is intrinsically changeable. It is this mutability of the Cosmos, which makes experience but also suffering possible.

Prakriti has two major aspects: (a) the above-mentioned transcendental ground or core, which bears the designation "foundation" (*pradhāna*) and (b) that core's numberless manifestations, known as *vikriti*, existing at the coarse level and various subtle levels. This contrast is often referred to in the expression "*prakriti-vikriti*." The manifestations of *prakriti* comprise both material and psychomental levels and objects.

vikriti

1.45: SŪKSHMA-VISHAYATVAM CA ALINGA-PARYAVASĀNAM

"And the subtle objects terminate in the Undifferentiated."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.45 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: The term *alinga* can be rendered as "Undifferentiate" or "Undifferentiated." It is that level of cosmic existence that has no particular distinguishing mark (*linga*). As such it is also unchanging like the *purusha*. This is the same as *prakriti-pradhāna.*

As I have shown in the Introduction to my book *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali* (p. 15), Patanjali's text allows us to reconstruct his cosmological model as follows:

ALINGA (the Undifferentiate/Undifferentiated) **LEVEL 1**
which we may interpret as a state of pure potentiality

↓

LINGA-MĀTRA (the Differentiate/Differentiated) **LEVEL 2**
which is the first evolute to emerge out of ALINGA
and which can be thought of as identical with BUDDHI (the higher mind)

↓

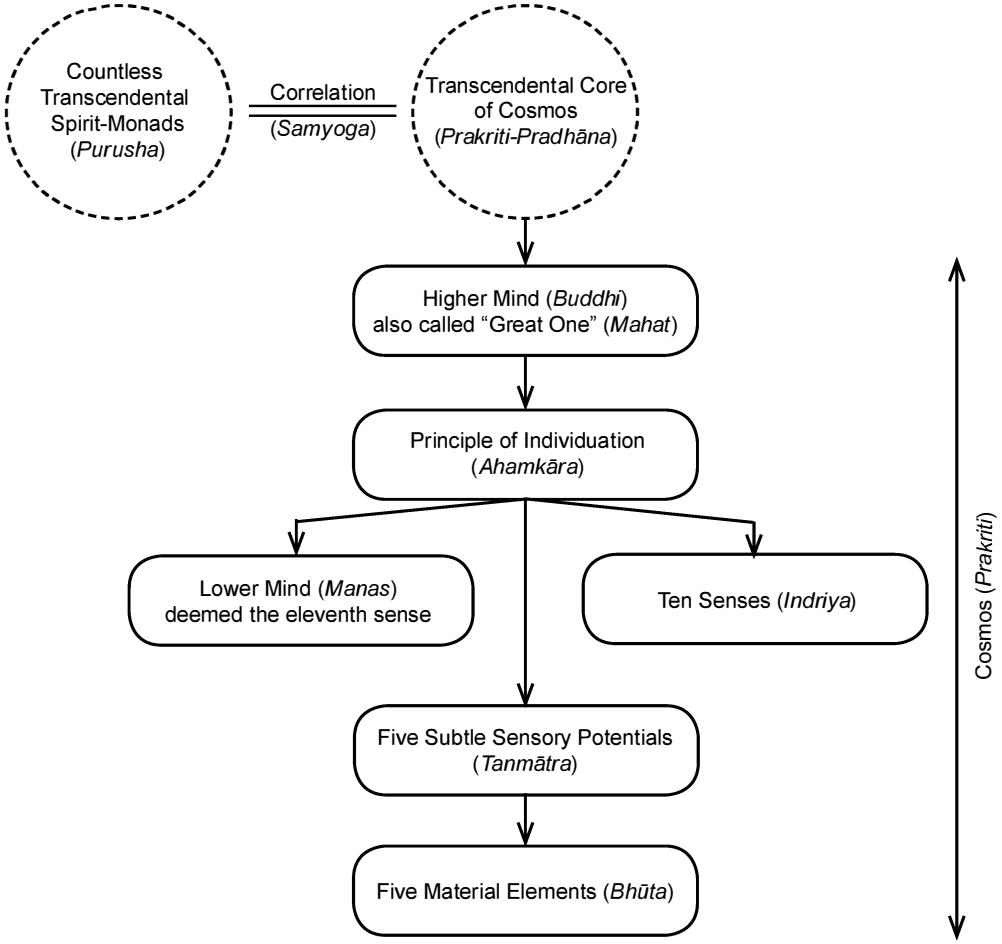
AVISHESHA (the Unparticularized) **LEVEL 3**
which emerges out of LINGA-MĀTRA
and which consists of two major psychocosmological evolutes:
ASMITĀ-MĀTRA (the principle of individuation) and the 5 TANMĀTRA
(subtle material elements, or sensory potentials: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching)

↓

VISHESHA (the Particularized) **LEVEL 4**
which evolves out of AVISHESHA and comprises MANAS (the lower mind),
the 10 INDRIYA (sense organs) and the 5 BHŪTA (material elements)

As is evident from the above diagram, Patanjali's ontology (science of being) and terminology differ from the model of Classical Sāmkhya, which effectively does away with the oft-made claim that he simply adopted that model.

Compare Patanjali's schema and terminology with the well-known framework provided by Classical Sāmkhya, which distinguishes between 24 psychocosmological (ontological) categories (*tattva*):


Countless Transcendental Spirit-Monads (*Purusha*)
Correlation (*Samyoga*)
Transcendental Core of Cosmos (*Prakriti-Pradhāna*)
Higher Mind (*Buddhi*) also called "Great One" (*Mahat*)
Principle of Individuation (*Ahamkāra*)
Lower Mind (*Manas*) deemed the eleventh sense
Ten Senses (*Indriya*)
Five Subtle Sensory Potentials (*Tanmātra*)
Five Material Elements (*Bhūta*)
Cosmos (*Prakriti*)

tattva

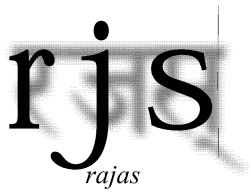
The ten senses, or sense instruments (*indriya*) are: (A) the five cognitive sense instruments (*buddhi-indriya*) consisting of eyes (*aksha*), ears (*shrotra*), nose (*ghrāna*), tongue (*rasana*), and skin (*tvac*); (B) the five conative sense instruments (*karma-indriya,* written *karmendriya*) consisting of speech (*vāc*), hands (*pāni*), feet (*pāda*), anus (*pāyu*), sexual organ (*upasthā*). The five subtle sensory potentials (*tanmātra*) are: speaking (*vacana*), manipulation (*ādāna*), locomotion (*viharana*), excretion (*utsarga*), generation (*ānanda,* lit. "bliss"). The five material elements (*bhūta*) are: ether (*ākāsha*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*agni*), water (*jala*), and earth (*prithivī*). The synonyms of *prakriti* are: foundation (*pradhāna*), unmanifest (*avyakta*), she-who-measures (*māyā*). The synonyms of *buddhi* are: great one (*mahat*), intelligence (*mati*), vision (*khyāti*), wisdom (*prajnā*). The synonyms of *ahamkāra* are: modified (*vaikrita*), fiery (*taijasa*), conceit (*abhimāna*).

Some Epic Yoga schools, as recorded in the *Mahābhārata,* acknowledged 25 or 26 ontological principles (*tattva*), while the South Indian tradition of Shaivism recognizes 36 such principles.

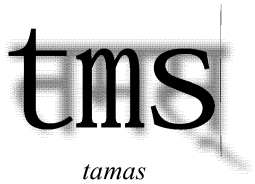
Our attention is fixated most of the time on the densest level of cosmic existence: We live largely through the lower mind, and are concerned with the material world and its five elements (ether/space, air, fire, water, and earth), as well as the ten senses associated with our physical existence. In practice, we think and behave like inveterate materialists, who take coarse matter as our guiding "light."

COSMIC BUILDING BLOCKS: THE THREE GUNAS

sattva



rajas



tamas

The Cosmos in all its levels is thought of being composed of three types of primary quality (*guna*):

*tamas** — lit. "darkness" denoting the psychocosmic principle of inertia

*rajas** — lit. "that which is colored/excited" denoting the psychocosmic principle of dynamism

sattva — lit. "beingness" denoting the psychocosmic principle of purity, or lucidity

We can understand these "qualities" (the literal meaning of *guna*) as three modes of behavior of all psychological and cosmological manifestations or, as for instance the sixteenth-century Yoga authority Vijnāna Bhikshu would have it, as actual "substances" that similar to atoms exist in untold numbers and that cause all composite things to behave in three distinct ways.

Whichever interpretation we prefer, the practical outcome is the same: The *guna* model allows us to understand objects (including emotions, feelings, thoughts, volitions, etc.) or conditions in terms of their position within the larger framework of Sāmkhya and Yoga metaphysics. Thus things that are predominantly governed by or manifest the quality of *tamas* tend to be dark, solid, stable, firm, slow, or concealing etc. Those things or conditions that show a preponderance of the quality of *rajas* tend to be active, dynamic, energetic, unstable, or fickle, etc. Those things or conditions that show a preeminence of the quality of *sattva* tend to be light, luminous, transparent, or revealing, etc.

In contrast to a mountain, which is characterized by *tamas,* a river is a typical manifestation of *rajas,* while the sky displays the quality of *sattva.* By comparison to the body, which has a preponderance of *tamas,* the lower mind is marked by *rajas* and the higher mind by *sattva.* Sorrow pertains to *tamas,* anger to *rajas,* and joy to *sattva.*

At the transcendental level, that is, as the level of *prakriti-pradhāna,* the *gunas* are thought to exist in perfect equilibrium. As soon as this balance is disturbed, evolution occurs and the diverse categories

*The Sanskrit words *tamas* and *rajas,* like *manas* (mind), are neuter words, not plurals.

of psychocosmic existence emerge. The lower down the evolutionary tree we go, the more dominant *tamas* becomes until we have our material universe, which by comparison with the higher mind is extremely dense.

In order to bring about the process of involution (*pratiprasava*), the Yoga practitioner must endeavor to harmonize the three types of *guna* within his or her own body-mind. This is accomplished by favoring *sattva,* which brings the higher mind (*buddhi*) to the fore, which then, in turn, produces the desired balance. The guiding ideal of Yoga is balance (*samatva*)! Let's now turn to the *Yoga-Sūtra* directly and learn what Patanjali said about the *gunas*.

2.18: PRAKĀSHA-KRIYĀ-STHITI-SHĪLAM BHŪTA-INDRIYA-ĀTMAKAM BHOGA-APAVARGA-ARTHAM DRISHYAM

"The "seen" [i.e., the cosmos] has the character (*shīla*) of brightness, activity, and inertia; it is embodied in elements and sense organs [serving the twofold] purpose of enjoyment and liberation."

2.19: VISHESHA-AVISHESHA-LINGAMĀTRA-ALINGĀNI GUNA-PARVĀNI

"The levels of the *gunas* are the Particularized, the Unparticularized, the Differentiated, and the Undifferentiated."

2.21: TAD-ARTHA EVA DRISHYA ĀTMĀ

"The essence (*ātman*) of the seen [i.e., the *prakriti*] is only for the sake of this [Seer]."

2.22: KRITA-ARTHAM PRATI NASHTAM APY ANASHTAM TAD-ANYA-SĀDHĀRANATVĀT

"Although [the *prakriti*] has ceased [to exist] for [the *yogin* whose] purpose has been accomplished, it has nevertheless not ceased [to exist altogether], since it is a commonality for [all] others."

4.12: ATĪTA-ANĀGATAM SVA-RŪPATO'STY ADHVA-BHEDĀD DHARMĀNĀM

"Past and future as such exist, because of the [visible] difference in the 'pathways' (*adhvan*) of the [countless] forms [i.e., objects of the cosmos]."

4.13: TE VYAKTA-SŪKSHMĀ GUNA-ĀTMĀNAH

"These [numberless objects of the cosmos] are manifest (*vyakta*) or subtle (*sūkshma*) and composed of the *gunas.*"

Continued

Please note that aphorism 2.20 has been dealt with in Lesson 3.

4.14: PARINĀMA-EKATVĀD VASTU-TATTVAM

"The "thatness" (*tattva*) of an object [derives] from the homogeneity (*ekatva*) in the transformation (*parināma*) [of the *gunas*]."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.18–2.19, 2.21–2.22 and 4.12–4.14 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: We will examine the dissolution of the *gunas* in connection with the higher yogic processes leading up to liberation in the final Lesson. In aphorism 4.12, for euphonic reasons, the terminal *ah* of *rupatah* must be changed to *o,* with the following *a* sound in *asti* being elided (ʻ). Also, *asti* must be changed to *asty* because of the following *a* sound of *adhva.*

When we ponder the above aphorisms, we find that Patanjali understands the Cosmos as a vast hierarchy of objects, both coarse (manifest, physical) and subtle (mental), that all have the *gunas* as their fundamental qualities, or building blocks. The Sanskrit term for "coarse" is *sthūla,* the term for "subtle" is *sūkshma.* All coarse and subtle objects originate in the transcendental core of the Cosmos, also called the "root creatrix" (*mūla-prakriti*). By contrast, the multiple transcendental Spirits are uncreated (or uncaused) and also do not give rise to anything.

This way of thinking originated with the early Upanishadic sages and proved incredibly influential throughout Hindu India. The *guna* model is a major contribution by the Sāmkhya tradition to metaphysical discourse, which has useful practical applications that Patanjali clearly regarded as viable for *yogins*.

The "transformations" of the Cosmos are continuous, just as the immutability of Spirit is eternal. Whereas the Cosmos, because of its inbuilt changeability, offers us no haven from suffering, Spirit is the only refuge for those who seek to escape suffering.

To exist within the Cosmos means to change.
Only the eternal Spirit, which exists beyond the Cosmos, is changeless.

It is because the body is a machine that education is possible. Education is the formation of habits, a superinducing of an artificial organisation upon the natural organisation of the body.

—Thomas Henry Huxley, *On Descartes' 'Discourse Touching The Method Of Using One's Reason Rightly And Of Seeking Scientific Truth'*, vol. 1 (1870)

THE BODY-MIND AS A MACHINE

Da Vinci drawing of a robot

From the Sāmkhya-Yoga perspective, the human body *and* mind are manifestations of *prakriti* and thus lack independent awareness. The consciousness associated with the mind is like the borrowed light of the Moon. The mind seems to have awareness only because of the "proximity" of the ever-present Spirit, who/which alone is of the essence of Awareness (*cit*). In other words, the body-mind is quite the automaton, or machine, that neurophysiologists would have us believe. Both are products of the insentient Cosmos, with the important difference that while the body is indeed a product of the five material elements (*bhūta*), it also includes functions that belong to the subtle material level of the *avishesha-parvan*, that is, the unparticularized aspect of psychocosmic existence. Thus, according to Sāmkhya and Yoga, we cannot understand the sensory functions entirely on the basis of the material elements and sense organs but also must look at their subtle counterparts, the sensory potentials or *tanmātras*.

Yoga rejects, at least by implication, the reductionist notion that the mind is nothing but brain activity. The brain, as a composite of the five material elements, belongs to the coarsest level of cosmic existence and therefore cannot possibly be held responsible for the existence of the mind. It is true, Patanjali places the mind—in its lower form as *manas*—on the same particularized level (*vishesha-parvan*) as the material elements, but this does not mean that he regards the mind as mere biochemical activity. Thus the sense of individuation, which seems to inform much of our existence, belongs to the unparticulized level (*avivesha-parvan*), and the higher mind or *buddhi* is associated with a yet more subtle level, the *linga-mātra-parvan.* If anything, Patanjali would stand modern scientific theory on its head and argue that the body along with the material world is a product of the mind at large.

Still, it may be found disquieting that, as Patanjali insists, the mind itself should lack awareness. This idea, however, begins to make sense when we consider the nature of consciousness more deeply. How is it possible, for instance, to lose awareness under certain conditions (during anaesthesia, in deep sleep, and brain trauma) and regain it later? Where did awareness go, and how was it recaptured? From a Yoga perspective, Awareness never increases or fades, though it may or may not be expressed in a body-mind, depending on that body-mind's condition in any given moment. The Light of Awareness can shine into the Cosmos only as brightly and efficiently as a particular body-mind permits.

EVOLUTION / INVOLUTION

The process of emanation that occurs out of the transcendental core of the Cosmos, or *prakriti-pradhāna,* can properly be called "evolution." It is responsible for the creation of the entire universe in its various levels (*parvan*) of manifestation. The yogic process, by contrast, is one of involution **(***pratiprasava***)** through which the *yogin's* mind (or attention, *citta*) travels from the densest level to the most subtle level of cosmic existence until the mind itself is dissolved. Thus Yoga is an exact reversal of the process of psychocosmic evolution. When the mind is dissolved, or resolved back into its cosmic matrix (*prakriti-pradhāna*), Spirit stands clear. The illusory connection (*samyoga*) between Spirit and Cosmos, *purusha* and *prakriti,* is lifted. Nothing ever happened at the level of Spirit, and the whole drama of bondage and liberation was enacted only at the level of psychocosmic existence—the greatest and most decisive mind game ever!

WHAT EXISTS NEVER CEASES TO BE

satkārya-vāda

It is a fundamental axiom of the Sāmkhya tradition and all Sāmkhya-based schools of Yoga that what exists (*sat*) never ceases to be. This idea seems to contradict what I have previously stated about impermanence. It is quite true that both inanimate and animate things have a beginning and an end, but this holds true only at the level of appearance, or manifestation (*vyakta*). A mountain—like the human body—sooner or later turns to dust. After billions of years, even our Sun will become extinct, and, astronomers tell us, our material universe as a whole will one day collapse in on itself only, perhaps, to expand again with another Big Bang.

While forms change, slowly or rapidly, the Cosmos (*prakriti*) at large persists. For Patanjali and the Sāmkhya philosophers, *prakriti* is as immortal as Spirit. Thus *sat* is *sat* forever. Being—That Which Is—can never be destroyed. We must distinguish, as does Patanjali (see aphorism 3.14), between substance (*dharmin*) and its qualities (*dharma*). Only the latter are incidental; they change and even disappear (i.e., become unmanifest and therefore imperceptible). A clay vessel dissolves back into clay, but the clay persists and lends itself to being transformed into a new clay object, be it a vessel or a sculpture. Metaphysically, there is eternal *prakriti* on the one hand and its temporary manifestations (*vikriti*) on the other. Here *prakriti* is substance, the "form bearer" (*dharmin*), and the manifestations are the qualities, or "forms" (*dharma*) of that substance.

This teaching is known as *satkārya-vāda,* the doctrine of the "pre-existent" (*sat*) effect (*kārya*): The Cosmos will always exist, though its diverse "effects," including levels of manifestation (from higher mind to mate-

rial universe), are all subject to change and negation. More than that, the Cosmos repeatedly unfurls its "effects," cyclically giving rise to new levels and individual objects. Creation (*srishti*) and destruction (*pralaya*) alternate in great cycles: *yugas* (world ages) and *kalpas* (cosmic eons). A world age is calculated to last hundreds of thousands of years, while an eon has a span of 4.32 billion solar years. The thinkers of India manifestly were accustomed to large numbers when reckoning time. More particularly, Yoga and Sāmkhya teach the kind of philosophical doctrine that assumes that the kind of change by which a cause is modified is actual rather than illusory. The difference is captured in the technical terms *parināma* ("transformation") vs. *vivarta* ("[phantom] mutation"). The latter applies, for instance, to Shankara's metaphysical system, which is also known as *māyā-vāda,* or "illusionism."

Most Advaita-Vedānta philosophers have criticized the *satkārya-vāda* of Yoga and Sāmkhya adherents, just as they have regarded the *asatkārya-vāda* of Nyāya and Vaisheshika philosophers as nonsensical. According to the latter thinkers, each effect originates independently and thus has no cause. The Vedānta philosophers subscribing to illusionism insist that from experience we know that a cause must change in order to become an effect. If we were to regard the Ultimate Reality as the cause of the Cosmos or anything whatsoever, such a proposition would contradict the fundamental assumption of Hindu spirituality that the Ultimate Reality is immutable. Furthermore, we also know from experience that when a cause becomes an effect, it ceases to exist, such as when milk becomes yoghurt or cheese. Again, the principle of the immutability of the Ultimate Reality would be violated. Finally, as the Vedānta thinkers would have it, every cause is itself the effect of a preceding cause. Thus the doctrine held by the proponents of Sāmkhya and Yoga that *prakriti* (as the cause of arising phenomena) is eternal must be rejected as absurd.

What are your own thoughts on this subject? How would you resolve this philosophical dilemma? Or would you side with Gautama the Buddha and deem all such philosophical issues as unresolvable and therefore pointless?

YOGA IS DISUNION

Yoga is generally and traditionally explained—according to the term's etymology—as "union." But Classical Yoga, which is based on the metaphysical assumption that Spirit and Cosmos are eternally separate principles that only apparently (but with fatal consequences to the individual) enter into association with each other, favors the opposite interpretation: Yoga is disunion (*viyoga*). It is the spiritual process by which we suspend the apparent connectedness, or correlation (*samyoga*), between *purusha* and *prakriti*. This matter is addressed in the second chapter of Patanjali's work as follows:

2.17: DRASHTRI-DRISHYAYOH SAMYOGO HEYA-HETUH

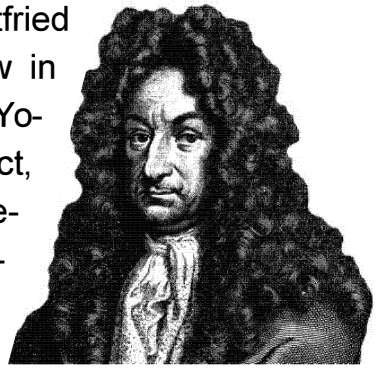
"The correlation between the Seer [i.e., the transcendental Self] and the seen [i.e., the cosmos] is the cause [of that which is] to be overcome."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.17 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*.

NOTE: Here *samyogah* must become *samyogo* on account of the following soft consonant.

The "correlation" (*samyoga*) happens at the empirical level; it is not an irrevocable absolute truth. It is a "fact" of experience, which we are asked to deal with. It consists mainly in our identifying with a particular cosmic structure, namely our individual body-mind, which we learn to regard as radically distinct from all other forms (including other body-minds). The correlation is a habit with which we are born. It presupposes an unenlightened mind burdened by all sorts of previous experiences and their karmic results. Even the newborn child is subject to this correlation, though it would appear that the more radical version of it—in the form of self-awareness—emerges gradually, until, around the second year of life, the "I" is firmly shaped and becomes a psychological constant from then on, with the notable exceptions of ego-transcending moments in daily life and ecstatic expierences. As long as we experience ourselves as distinct individuals, we are under the spell of *prakriti,* which means we live on the basis of the assumed correlation between Cosmos and Ultimate Awareness.

Correlation (Samyoga) and Leibniz



The German philosopher-mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) wondered how in metaphysical dualism two disparate entities (in Yoga's case Spirit and Cosmos) could ever interact, and he proposed a "preestablished harmony" between them, which was set up by God (the ultimate clock maker). According to this view, body and mind (which are made of entirely separate substances) run parallel like clocks, so that the activities and changes in one faithfully reflect the activities and changes in the other. Sometimes this model is applied to Patanjali's metaphysics, except that Spirit knows no activity or change, which happen only in the Cosmos. Also, it is Patanjali's opinion that the "correlation" between Spirit and Cosmos can be interrupted (which in fact coincides with liberation).

"SATTVIFICATION"

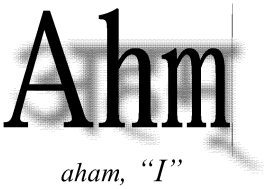
guna

In connection with the *gunas,* the primary qualities of cosmic existence, I mentioned earlier that Yoga is a sweeping process of *sattvification.* I have coined this term to convey the idea that, as *yogins* and *yoginis,* we must gradually harmonize the *gunas.* This involves developing especially the quality of *sattva,* the factor of lucidity, transparency, or clarity. From a yogic perspective, this is possible only because the effect of *sattvification* preexists in the mind. In other words, at the highest level of mind, there is already a preponderance of the quality of *sattva,* and therefore we must merely enhance it to encompass other aspects of the mind. As we cultivate *sattva* within us, we become calmer, clearer, wiser, more focused, more patient, and also more compassionate. *Sattva* defines what we might call the character of a Yoga practitioner. At the same time, however, we must avoid premature or imbalanced *sattvification,* which happens for instance when we overdo a good thing, such as dieting or meditating.

The ego is not master in its own house.

—Sigmund Freud, "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis" (1917)

IS THE EGO REAL?



aham, "I"

From the perspective of Classical Yoga, whatever happens within the realm of *prakriti* is quite real. Therefore the ego—the sense of I—is also real. Ontologically, the ego is a function or aspect of the psychocosmic "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*) or "I-maker" (*ahamkāra*) according to Sāmkhya philosophy. We often hear that the ego is illusory. This notion, which properly belongs to Vedānta, is, like Patanjali's own explanation of the ego, neither entirely right nor entirely wrong.

It is a fact that we are ego-driven, and in this sense the ego is very real. It also is a fact that our sense of being separate from everything else is a cognitive error, and as such the sense of ego is illusory. As the Buddha carefully demonstrated through what would now be called phenomenological analysis, everything is interconnected and interdependent, and thus the idea that something, even the ego, could exist as an island unto itself, is not only mistaken but potentially perilous. It is a dangerous notion, because we can easily come to the conclusion that everything revolves around the ego and that others are unimportant. Witness our present-day devastation of the environment and what biologists have come to label as the Sixth Mass Extinction on our planet. Only a hypertrophied ego can disregard Nature, the very basis of its life, so wantonly.

- Now read Chapter 8 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Jacobsen, Knut A. *Prakṛti in Sāmkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications.* New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

Larson, Gerald J. *Classical Sāmkhya.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, repr. 1969. [This work includes a translation of Īshvara Krishna's *Sāmkhya-Kārikā.*]

_____ and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds. *A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987.

_____. "The Notion of Satkārya in Sāmkhya: Toward a Philosophical Reconstruction," *Philosophy East and West.* Vol. 25 No. 1 (January 1975), pp. 31–40.

Sinha, Nandalal. *The Samkhya Philosophy.* New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, repr. 1979. [This work, first published in 1915, contains translations of the *Sāmkhya-Sūtra* along with Aniruddha's *Vritti*, Vijnāna Bhikshu's *Bhāshya* and extracts from Mahādeva Vedāntin's *Vritti-Sāra*, as well as full renderings of the *Tattva-Samāsa, Sāmkhya-Kārikā,* and *Pancashikhā-Sūtra.*]

Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* is also known by the name of *Sāmkhya-Pravacana-Sūtra,* which indicates the historically close relationship between Yoga and Sāmkhya. At the same time, however, we must properly acknowledge the fact that Patanjali's system differs from Sāmkhya in a number of ways.

Suggested Yoga Practice
SEEING GUNAS EVERYWHERE

1. Throughout the day, whenever your activities permit you sufficient space for reflection, consider how what is arising inside of you or in the outside world is all a play of the three *gunas.* Do this exercise for a couple of weeks and keep a diary of your daily observations. Here are some examples:

Upon rising in the morning, reflect on your feeling state. Are you feeling wide awake (*sattva*), agitated (*rajas*), or sluggish (*tamas*)? Are you looking forward to the day with calm eagerness (*sattva*), impatience (*rajas*), or lack of enthusiasm (*tamas*)?

Is your breakfast light (*sattva*) or does it consist of things like coffee and sugary food (*rajas*), or is it oily with lots of bread, cheese, and other heavy items (*tamas*)?

Do you leave for work in good time so as to avoid having to rush (*sattva*), or do you rush to "beat" the traffic (*rajas*), or are you late (again) because you are feeling lethargic (*tamas*)?

At work, are you cheerful to your coworkers and customers (*sattva*) or do you feel too rushed to consider others (*rajas*), or are you too indifferent to bother (*tamas*)?

Do you take the time to eat a healthy lunch slowly away from your desk (*sattva*) or do you gulp down a quick snack while continuing to work (*rajas*), or are satisfied with munching on a candybar (*tamas*)?

Is your workplace bright and pleasant (*sattva*), noisy and like Central Station (*rajas*), or dull and dreary (*tamas*)?

Do you like to listen to relaxing or uplifting music (*sattva*), loud pop music (*rajas*), or monotonous "elevator" music?

Do you tend to spend your evenings relaxing, meditating, and reading spiritually inspiring books (*sattva*) or do you like to go out for entertainment (*rajas*) or "veg out" in front of the television (*tamas*)?

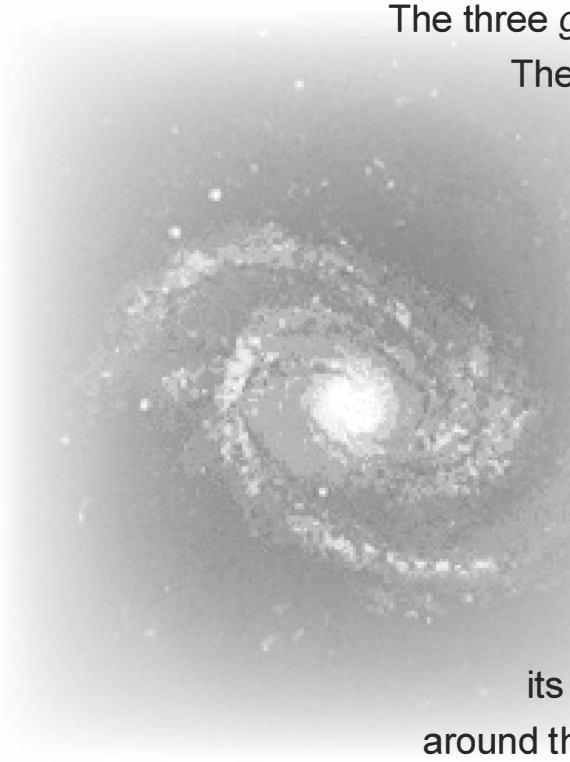
Do you go to bed in a calm mood (*sattva*) or an agitated state of mind (*rajas*), or do you "collapse dead tired" (*tamas*)?

2. Obviously, there are very many more questions you can ask yourself to determine the quality of your life in terms of the three *gunas.* What you will probably find is that your activities and situations are a mix between *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas.* As Īshvara Krishna states in his *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* (vs. 13):

> *Sattva* is deemed to be light and illuminating; *rajas* to be exciting and mobile; *tamas* to be heavy and obscuring. Like a lamp [which consists of oil, wick, and flame] these [three *gunas*] function [cooperatively] for the purpose [of Spirit].

Thus it might be beneficial to assign intuitively a percentage to each *guna.* For instance, you might conclude that your attitude during rush hour is 20% *sattva,* 70% *rajas*, and 10% *tamas.*

3. Consider how you can make your life more sattvic and then also implement some of your useful insights.



The three *gunas* are never separate from one another. They are like three strands composing the same rope. Thus when we look at anything, we can appreciate it as the interplay between the three *gunas*. The same object can be illuminating, dynamic, and inertial depending on how we look at it. For instance, the Sun is clearly a bringer of light, but it also is vastly active hurling through space at the incredible speed of 54,000 miles per hour, and its mass is so huge that it holds all the planets under its spell dragging them along in its path around around the galactic center.

For Reflection

Because of the demanding practical exercise in self-observation ("Seeing the Gunas Everywhere"), there are only a few "For Reflection" questions in this Lesson.

1. Consider our modern society's disproportionate fascination with quantity over quality, which seems to extend over most, if not all, areas of life. How does this manifest in your own life?

2. If the body-mind is not unlike a machine, how does this express itself in your own case? What are the major automaticities (habit patterns) in your personal life as far as the body is concerned? Which of these most reinforce your felt sense that you *are* your particular body-mind?

3. Which activities most remind you of your true identity as limitless Awareness, or Spirit?

4. What do you think *and* feel about Patanjali's strict dualism between Spirit and Cosmos? Do you think that dualism is a viable metaphysical model? Or do you find nondualism more convincing?

5. When you think about the regularities of Nature—from the ebb and flow of the oceans to the pathways of the planets around the Sun—does your mind look for an explanation within the Cosmos itself or in some transcendental agency like God?

6. Do you feel powerless in the midst of all the numerous outside influences that shape your life? Or do you believe that somehow you are still in control despite all those influences on your life? If you admit that many aspects of your own physical and mental existence are impacted by outside forces, do you think of them as being truly external to yourself, thus subscribing to a form of dualism? Or do you think that those influences are part of the same larger life that also has given rise to you and that in many ways sustains you?

Don't rush through the course!
Make your studying a yogic practice.

QUESTIONNAIRE 4

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What is *prakriti*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the material universe
(b) the transcendental core of the Cosmos
(c) Cosmos
(d) insentient matter
(e) the Cosmos in its transcendental and immanent aspects

2. How many psychocosmic principles of existence does Classical Samkhya acknowledge? *(Check one)*

(a) 18
(b) 24
(c) 25
(d) 26
(e) 36

3. What is meant by *tri-lakshana*? *(Check one)*

(a) Three Gunas
(b) Three Marks
(c) Īshvara, Purusha, and Prakriti together

4. What is another name for the transcendental core or matrix of the Cosmos? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *mūla-prakriti*
(b) *vikriti*
(c) *satkārya*
(d) *prakriti-pradhāna*
(e) *prakriti-vikriti*
(f) *prakriti-dharma*

5. Which of the following are synonyms of "higher mind"? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *bodhi*
(b) *buddhi*
(c) *manas*
(d) *linga-mātra*
(e) *mahat*
(f) *asmitā-mātra*

6. What is meant by "subtle realm"? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) any invisible location
(b) the zero-dimension of Spirit
(c) the transcendental core of the Cosmos
(d) a *vikriti* realm other than the material universe
(e) the location of disembodied beings (like deities)

7. Which of the following objects is considered as belonging to the subtle cosmic realms? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) the ideal of a spiritual path
(b) the sense of I
(c) the nervous system
(d) meditation
(e) the Internet
(f) a ghost
(g) Spirit

8. Which of the following objects could be considered as representing a preponderance of *sattva*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) the Sun
(b) the Earth
(c) outer space
(d) light
(e) heaven
(f) magnet
(g) photon
(h) glass

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 5
Dispelling Ignorance Through the Light of Wisdom

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand Patanjali's conception of spiritual ignorance (avidyā) and how it governs our lives and to comprehend his means of ending it through spiritual practice and dispassion, and to understand his notion of the unconscious mind, which contains the determinants of a person's karmic destiny.*

- The Nature of Karmic Existence
- Living in Ignorance
- Karma and Reincarnation
- Suffering and Its Causes
- The Causes of Affliction
- From Ignorance to Ego and Its Various Expressions
- Desire
- Kriyā-Yoga
- The Supreme Value of Dispassion
- Spiritual Seeking and Spiritual Materialism
- Probing the Unconscious Mind
- Seeing the Cosmos as Suffering
- The Elimination of Suffering
- Inner Vs. Outer Renunciation: A Lesson From the Gītā
- Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Visualizing Light
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 5

THE NATURE OF KARMIC EXISTENCE

samsāra

The world as we experience it is called *samsāra* in Sanskrit, perhaps best circumscribed by the popular saying "What goes around, comes around." It is a world of karmic necessity in which every volition and action has its corresponding effect. We can generally gauge the immediate outcome of our actions on the physical level, but seldom are we able to see their long-term consequences, never mind any repercussions they might have in another lifetime. Yoga adepts are acutely aware of the fact that to be alive means to be embroiled in the iron law of causation at the moral level. In other words, they know that

(a) all actions have far-reaching consequences, which go beyond the obvious effects anyone can expect from them
(b) all volitions (thoughts, intentions) are subject to the same law
(c) the karmic effect extends beyond the present life to future embodiments
(d) no one can escape karmic necessity *unless* the ego has been stably transcended through enlightenment (and in that case actions and volitions still have their respective repercussions but do not *bind* the enlightened being)

Thus *samsāra* is equivalent to a state of spiritual bondage (*bandha*).

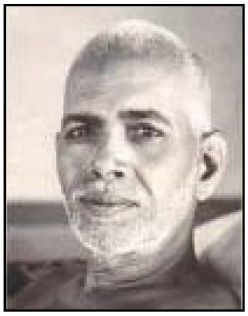
◘ Now read Essays #24 and #25 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

LIVING IN IGNORANCE

As long as we live in ignorance of our true nature, which is pure Awareness, we are effectively lost in the jungle of *samsāra* where we don't see the forest for all the trees. That is to say, we lack perspective unless we happen to come across spiritual teachings. Without them, we take *samsāra* at face value and don't ever ponder the possibility of finding a bright clearing within it that gives us lasting peace and true understanding. A person can be incredibly knowledgeable and yet be spiritually ignorant; conversely, many of India's finest sages have been uneducated (witness Ramana Maharshi) while possessing great wisdom. Certainly they know everything they need to know to live an exemplary life.


Ramana Maharshi

KARMA AND REINCARNATION

The belief in karma is closely associated with the belief in repeated reembodiment. Together these form fundamental axioms of Yoga and are common to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. For the Yoga adepts, they are not beliefs but experiential certainties, as their vision penetrates into the subtle (*sūkshma*) realms of existence and they can see directly the post-mortem state of individuals.

The idea of repeated births and deaths also is an integral part of many other religio-spiritual traditions, including Judaism and early Christianity. It is often said that the belief in reincarnation was anathematized at the Christian Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., but this appears to be incorrect, as that Council was primarily concerned about the so-called Arian heresy. Origen of Alexandra (185–254 A.D.), one of the Church Fathers, was a firm believer in re-embodiment. He also happened to rouse the ire of fellow bishops for this and other "controversial" teachings, which were finally declared to be heretical at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D. Origen's critics raised the following principal objections against reincarnation:

(1) It does not agree with the Christian ideal of salvation.

(2) It contradicts the idea of bodily resurrection at the end of time.

(3) We don't recollect any previous lives.

The first two points are really theological beliefs, and it would make no sense to discuss them here. The third point, however, is factually incorrect. Cases of at least apparent recollection of previous lives among young children have been extensively investigated by Ian Stevenson, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia.

Furthermore, great adepts (who are not given to fantasy or lying) have spoken of their own former lives and that of others. The Tibetan *tulku* system is based on realized masters voluntarily reincarnating over and over again to benefit others. Thus the

well-known Buddhist leader Tenzin Gyatso is the fourteenth in the Dalai Lama series of incarnations.

Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), the “sleeping prophet,” started talking about karmic causes for present-day illnesses while deeply in trance and against his own personal beliefs. His thousands of recorded cases make for fascinating study.

When I asked His Eminence Garchen Triptul Rimpoche, a highly realized Kagyu master, which teaching is the most important to convey to people, he unhesitatingly referred to the teaching about karma and reincarnation. Understandably, many contemporaries, who do not have access to the subtle realms, are very skeptical about karma and reincarnation. They are, however, clearly integral to Yoga, and it behooves us to at least keep an open mind. Sometimes these twin notions are rejected because they are not properly understood; at other times, they are rejected because they are correctly intuited to be rather “inconvenient.” Rather than making defeatists out of us, they actually challenge us to live responsibly and with great mindfulness!

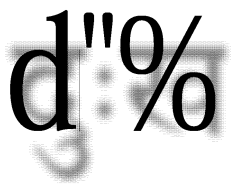
The idea of reincarnation and to a lesser extent that of karma have entered into New Age thought, though often they are presented in rather unsophisticated form and with little understanding. It has become popular to claim a previous life as Mark Antony or Cleopatra, but such delusions should not discourage anyone from seriously investigating these important and widely held notions. Please refer to the bibliography of this Lesson.

Don’t rush through the course!
Make your studying a yogic practice.

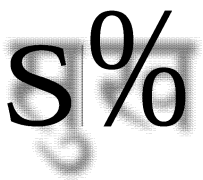
The world is full of suffering, it
is also full of overcoming it.

—Helen Keller

SUFFERING AND ITS CAUSES



duhkha



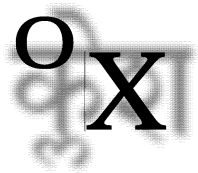
sukha

If it were not for the fact that living in *samsāra* is inherently difficult, probably no one would ever have bothered to find an explanation or solution for this. Generally, people don't act unless they have to. When the sages of ancient India first formulated their wisdom teachings, they were strongly motivated to find a way out of what they perceived to be an intolerable situation: We are born, live a relatively short life, and die—all attendant with much suffering (*duhkha*), which is the opposite of ease (*sukha*).

The antonyms *duhkha* and *sukha* are both formed from the same root *kha*, which means space and more especially (in Vedic times) the "space" or axle-hole of a wagon wheel. The prefix *dur* (=*duh*) means "bad, unfavorable," while the prefix *su* means "good, favorable." Thus *samsāra* can be explained as "bad space."

- Now read Essay #20 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapters 4 and 5 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

THE CAUSES OF AFFLICTION



klesha

The causes-of-affliction (*klesha*) are the motor that drives our ordinary human life. They are the reason why everything has the quality of suffering. These potent psychological factors shape all our experiences and endow them with the peculiar binding quality of the empirical world (*samsāra*).

2.3: AVIDYĀ-ASMITĀ-RĀGA-DVESHA-ABHINIVESHĀH PANCA-KLESHĀH

"Ignorance, I-am-ness, attachment, aversion, and the will-to-live are the five causes-of-affliction."

2.4: AVIDYĀ KSHETRAM UTTARESHĀM PRASUPTA-TANU-VICCHINNA-UDĀRĀNĀM

"Ignorance is the 'field' of the others [i.e., I-am-ness, etc.]; [these can be] dormant, attenuated, intercepted, or aroused."

2.5: ANITYA-ASHUCI-DUHKHA-ANĀTMASU NITYA-SHUCI-SUKHA-ĀTMA-KHYĀTIR AVIDYĀ

"Ignorance is seeing [that which is] eternal, pure, joyous, and the Self in [that which is] ephemeral, impure, sorrowful, and the nonself."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.3–2.5 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 2.5, *khyātih* becomes *khyātir* because of the following *a* sound of *avidyā.*

FROM IGNORANCE TO EGO AND ITS VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS

As long as we are in the grip of spiritual ignorance—that is, in the absence of true Self-knowledge—we are enslaved to the artificial sense of being a particular body-mind and its diverse functions. Patanjali calls this "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*).

If we do not identify with Spirit, we necessarily identify with one or the other product of cosmic existence and then become embroiled in its activities through attachment (*rāga*) or aversion (*dvesha*) and all the many karmic consequences resulting from this fateful misidentification.

All the while, the survival instinct is reinforced and in turn feeds the other causes-of-affliction, only to give rise to further suffering. The *kleshas* do indeed spell trouble for us. Yet, they define the human condition from birth on and can only be removed through the conscious process of spiritual growth. Other than that, there is no escape from them.

All mental states that are caused by the *kleshas* are called "afflicted" (*klishta*). Only those mental states arising from discernment (*viveka*) are "nonafflicted" (*aklishta*).

asmitā

rāga

dvesha

abhinivesha

DESIRE

Desire is the illusion by which man is identified with, entangled in experience. The term covers the entire range of sensational and emotional experience. It includes the craving for food, activity, or rest, the love of comfort in which is involved the desire to escape discomfort, the craving for excitement and for amusement, the love of home and friends, the pleasure of possessing, the urge of sex, the ecstasy of the artist, the adoration of the devotee. An infinite elaboration of enticement draws the soul toward the experience through which it must pass, and man becomes so identified with his emotions that he is unable to realize himself as existing apart from them. It is part of the yoga training to 'kill out desire', but this familiar phrase does not mean a withdrawal from human experience, because experience is the valid means of growth. It is from the sense of identity with experience that the candidate must extricate himself. By continual practice he learns to realize that the cravings of the physical body, the constant play of the emotions, the automatic weaving and interweaving of the ever-active mind, are exterior to an inner consciousness which is himself. Experience then becomes more objective, less enthralling and yet in a sense more interesting. Instead of being used by it he uses it, and is the master where once he was the slave; he is the rider of his steed, not the passenger it carries. As such he can choose what he will think and also what he will feel.

—Geraldine Coster, *Yoga and Western Psychology,* pp. 160–161.
This book was originally published in 1934.

As we learned from aphorism 2.4, the causes-of-affliction can be dormant, attenuated, intercepted, or aroused. Here is an example: A mother's attachment to her child will be dormant until she actually has a child. Her attachment becomes attenuated when she realizes that her child cannot fill the void she feels in her heart caused by her sense of alienation from Spirit. She also notices that her attachment tends to temporarily recede whenever her child misbehaves and she feels anger (a form of aversion, *dvesha*). On those occasions, attachment is intercepted by the *klesha* of aversion. Her attachment is fully aroused, on the other hand, when there is a threat of being separated from her child. Consider incidences from your own life to learn to appreciate the play between the *kleshas* and the influence they have in your life!

The abyss of desire is difficult to fill.

—Chinese Proverb

2.6: DRIG-DARSHANA-SHAKTYOR EKA-ĀTMATĀ IVA ASMITĀ

"I-am-ness is the identification as it were of the powers of vision and 'visioner' [i.e., the Self]."

2.7: SUKHA-ANUSHAYĪ RĀGAH

"'Attachment is [that which] rests on pleasant [experiences]."

2.8: DUHKHA-ANUSHAYĪ DVESHAH

"Aversion is [that which] rests on sorrowful [experiences]."

2.9: SVA-RASA-VĀHĪ VIDUSHO'PI TATHĀ-RŪDHO'BHINIVESHAH

"The will-to-live, flowing along [by its] own momentum, is rooted thus even in the sages."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.6–2.9 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 2.6. the dual genitive *shaktyoh* becomes *shaktyor* because of the following e *sound.* In 2.9, there are two elisions of the initial *a* sound: in the words *api* and *abhinivesha,* for euphonic reasons as before.

KRIYĀ-YOGA

kriyā-yoga

The teaching about the causes-of-affliction (*klesha*) forms the core of the theory and practice of what Patanjali calls Kriyā-Yoga, the "Yoga of Action." As I have argued elsewhere, this teaching could be regarded as the heart of Patanjali's system. It is, therefore, quite curious that he should be widely remembered for his eight-limbed (*ashta-anga*) path, which appears to have been inserted into the *Yoga-Sūtra* either by Patanjali himself or by one of his disciples or a later editor.

According to Patanjali, Kriyā-Yoga comprises three main practices, which are designed to propel the *yogin* or *yoginī* along the path of ecstatic unification and to thin out the causes-of-suffering, thereby leading directly to the supreme goal of liberation. I will discuss *tapas, svādhyāya,* and *īshvara-pranidhāna* in Lesson 8.

I consider the aphorisms dealing with Kriyā-Yoga to be the most important part of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* because they expose the karmic mechanism by which we perpetuate the illusion of separative existence. No other Hindu Yoga text addresses the yogic equivalent to the Unconscious in such a direct manner.

2.1: TAPAH SVĀDHYĀYA-ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNĀNI KRIYĀ-YOGAH

"Austerity, study, [and] devotion to the Lord [constitute] the Yoga of Action."

2.2: SAMĀDHI-BHĀVANA-ARTHAH KLESHA-TANŪ-KARANA-ARTHASH CA

"[This Yoga has] the purpose of cultivating ecstasy, as well as the purpose of attenuating the causes-of-affliction."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.1–2.2 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
  NOTE: In aphorism 2.2, *arthah* becomes *arthash* because of the following *c* sound.
- Next read Essay #61 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

Dispassion is mental nudity.
—Inspired by Swami Sivananda

THE SUPREME VALUE OF DISPASSION

vairāgya

Patanjali's definition of Kriyā-Yoga might give one the impression that this approach relies primarily on the human will, but, as I have tried to argue in my commentary on aphorism 2.1, Yoga cannot succeed without the simultaneous cultivation of dispassion, which is really a kind of resignation of the will: We distance ourselves from the usual objects of the will, namely those which we have recognized as not being conducive to our highest spiritual welfare. Letting go of worldly things and concerns amounts to surrendering the self-will, that aspect of our embodied ego-self that constantly seeks to "grasp" the world.

Patanjali talks about dispassion (*vairāgya*) already in aphorism 1.12, where he cites it as a counterpole to "practice" (*abhyāsa*), which encompasses all other means of the yogic path. I have covered this aphorism in Lesson 1. Now we need to examine Patanjali's further statements about dispassion, the opposite of attachment (*rāga*) but also of aversion (*dvesha*). The deeper a person goes into Yoga, the more he or she is asked to let go of. Like ecstasy, dispassion has many levels, and, like ecstasy, dispassion is difficult to master.

Be melting snow. Wash yourself of yourself.

—Rumi

1.15: DRISHTA-ĀNUSHRAVIKA-VISHAYA-VITRISHNASYA VASHĪKĀRA-SAMJNĀ VAIRĀGYAM

"Dispassion is the certainty of mastery by [that adept who is] without thirst for seen [i.e., worldly] [and] revealed objects."

1.16: TAT-PARAM PURUSHA-KHYĀTER GUNA-VAITRISHNYAM

"The superior [form] of this [dispassion] is nonthirsting for the qualities (*guna*) [of the Cosmos], [which results] from the vision of Spirit."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.15–1.16 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In aphorism 1.15, the term *samjnā* can also be rendered as "knowledge" or "certainty." In aphorism 1.16, *khyāteh* becomes *khyāter* because of the following soft consonant.

SPIRITUAL SEEKING AND SPIRITUAL MATERIALISM

Since prior to liberation or enlightenment, we are always subject to the causes-of-affliction, we may safely assume that even our quest for spiritual illumination is conditioned by ignorance, "I-am-ness," and the other *kleshas.* When we closely inspect our mind, we will find that even our noblest intentions and ideals spring from muddy waters. This is a very important insight, which helps us see our spiritual endeavors in a realistic light and avoid the trap of self-delusion. At the same time, however, we must not succumb to discouragement but keep on pursuing the path with the utmost mindfulness.

Spiritual seeking is frequently associated with what the Tibetan adept Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche called "spiritual materialism," about which he wrote in his important book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (*Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 15):

> Ego is constantly attempting to acquire and apply the teachings of spirituality for its own benefit. The teachings are treated as an external thing, external to "me," a philosophy which we try to imitate. We do not actually want to identify with or become the teachings. So if our teacher speaks of renunciation of ego, we attempt to mimic renunciation of ego. We go through the motions, make the appropriate gestures, but we really do not want to sacrifice any part of our way of life. We become skillful actors, and while playing deaf and dumb to the real meaning of the teachings, we find some comfort in pretending to follow the path.

PROBING THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

When we consider our motivations, we are beginning to dip into the uncharted region of the unconscious. Patanjali does not have a special term for this aspect of the mind (*citta*), but it is clear from his elaborations that this is where the hidden karmic forces reside that determine so much of our present life and are instrumental in shaping our future across individual embodiments. We cannot understand the causes-of-affliction (*klesha*) apart from Patanjali's notion of "subliminal activators" (*samskāra*), which are the mental DNA between one embodiment and the next. Strung together into traits" (*vāsanā*), they ensure that the "boomerang effect" of karma works unfailingly through the process of "fruition" (*phala*).

2.12: KLESHA-MŪLAH KARMA-ĀSHAYO DRISHTA-ADRISHTA-JANMA-VEDANĪYAH

"The action deposit, rooted in the causes-of-affliction, may be experienced in the visible [i.e., present] birth or in invisible [i.e., future births]."

2.13: SATI MŪLE TAD-VIPĀKO JATY-ĀYUR-BHOGĀH

"While the root exists, its fruition [also exists in the form of] birth, life, [and] experience."

2.14: TE HLĀDA-PARITĀPA-PHALĀH PUNYA-APUNYA-HETUTVĀT

"These [i.e., birth, life, and experience] have delight [or] distress as results, according to meritorious [or] demeritorious causes."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.12–2.14 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
  NOTE: I have translated aphorism 2.12 here slightly differently from my book, taking the phrase *klesha-mūla* more precisely to be a qualifying adjectival clause of *karma-āshaya.* The plural *bhogāh* in aphorism 2.12 is required because it determines the compound *jaty-āyuh* (*āyur-*) and not because many life experiences are intended, though this happens to be the case.

We are so accustomed to experiencing pleasure or pain (physical and emotional discomfort) that we seldom ask ourselves whether this endless round of ups and downs are is necessary. Only when our mind has become sensitized to a philosophical way of thinking do we begin to wonder about the possible significance of pleasure and pain. Long ago, India's sages understood that neither type of experience is conducive to desirable ends. Even pleasure, being addictive, keeps us trapped in the wheels of *samsāra.*

When we examine the Unconscious, we essentially are looking at the workings of karma. Patanjali turns to this subject matter again in the fourth *pāda* of his work, but this time from the perspective of the *yogin* who is overcoming the baneful influence of the karmic nexus.

4.6: TATRA DHYĀNA-JAM ANĀSHAYAM

"Of these [individualized minds, that mind which is] born of meditation [becomes ultimately] devoid of [subliminal] deposit (*āshaya*)."

4.7: KARMA-ASHUKLA-AKRISHNAM YOGINAS TRIVIDHAM ITARESHĀM

"The karma of the *yogin* is neither black nor white; [the karma] of others is threefold."

4.8: TATAS TAD-VIPĀKA-ANUGUNĀNĀM EVA ABHIVYAKTIR VĀSANĀM

"Thence [follows] the manifestation only [of those] subliminal-traits (*vāsanā*) that correspond to the fruition of their [particular karma]."

4.9: JĀTI-DESHA-KĀLA-VYAVAHITĀNĀM APY ĀNANTARYAM SMRITI-SAMSKĀRAYOR EKA-RŪPATVĀT

"On account of the uniformity between the depth-memory (*smriti*) and the subliminal-activators (*samskāra*), [there is] a causal-relation [between the manifestation of subliminal-activators and the karmic cause], even though [cause and effect] may be separated [in terms of] place, time, and category-of-existence (*jāti*)."

4.10: TĀSĀM ANĀDITVAM CA ĀSHISHO NITYATVĀT

"And these [subliminal-activators] are without beginning because of the perpetuity of the primordial will [inherent in the Cosmos itself]."

4.11: HETU-PHALA-ĀSHRAYA-ĀLAMBANAIH SAMGRIHITATVĀD ESHĀM ABHĀVE TAD-ABHĀVAH

"Because of the connection [of the subliminal-traits] with cause, fruit, substratum, and support, [it follows that] with the disappearance of these [factors], the disappearance [also] of those [subliminal-traits] [is brought about]."

☐ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.6–4.11 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have translated some of the above aphorisms slightly differently from my book. In *sūtra* 4.7, the plural *yoginah* must be changed to *yoginas* owing to the following *t* sound. Similarly, in aphorism 4.8, *tatah* becomes *tatas* because of the following *t* sound, while *abhivyaktih* becomes *abhivyaktir* because of the following *v* sound. In aphorism, the Sanskrit euphonic rules demand that *api* be converted to *apy* because of the following *a* sound, while the dual genitive *samskārayoh* becomes *samskārayor* because of the following *e* sound. In 4.10, *āshishah* becomes *āshisho* because of the following *n* sound.

As soon as we start to meditate, we begin to change our karmic destiny. We set in motion powerful forces that in due course will move our mind toward the state of supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) in which the Unconscious is most directly emptied of its countless karmic seeds.

The Yoga adept seeks to create not merely a karmically positive mind for himself but a mind that, in the end, is completely free from the consquences of karma. Self-transcending mental states (such as inner renunciation and discernment) alone can guarantee the creation of an inner environment that is conducive to spiritual liberation. However, whenever he or she forgets to be present as mere Awareness and starts to identify with the various contents of the mind, the karmic chain reaction is set in motion again. Thus, the primary challenge of the Yoga practitioner is to "recollect" Spirit-Awareness in every moment.

Karma, far from being arbitrary, is conceived as a rigid causal law. The only way we can escape its consequences—in terms of rebirth and suffering—is by placing ourselves entirely beyond its operational scope, that is, by identifying ourselves with the *purusha.* Then karma will still hold sway over our body-mind, but this time in our favor. For, the forces of the Cosmos—that is to say, the karmic influences—work both ways: they can bind us to the cosmic machine or free us from its clutches. As the *Maitrī-Upanishad* (6.34) puts it:

> The mind is said to be twofold: pure or impure. It is impure from contact with desire (*kāma*); pure when free from desire. When one has liberated the mind from sloth and heedlessness and made it immovable and then attains to the mind-transcending state (*amanī-bhāva*), this is the supreme estate. The mind should be restrained in the heart until such time as it becomes dissolved. This is gnosis and liberation. all else is but book learning. He whose mind has become pure through ecstasy (*samādhi*) and has entered the Self, he experiences a happiness (*sukha*) that cannot be described in words and is only intelligible to the "inner instrument" (*antahkarana*) [i.e., the purified mind].

Ignorant [of the fact] that Reality (*tattva*) abides within oneself, the fool is confused by the scriptures (*shāstra*), just like a shepherd who is searching for a goat in a well when it is with the flock.

Verbal knowledge cannot destroy the delusions of *samsāra,* just as darkness is not dispelled by [merely] talking about a lamp.

A wisdomless person studying [the scriptures] is like a blind person looking into the mirror. O Goddess, scriptural learning (*shāstra*) leads to knowledge of Reality [only in the case] of the wise.

***—Kula-Arnava-Tantra* 1.96–98**

SEEING THE COSMOS AS SUFFERING

The ordinary individual (or what in Sanskrit is called the *samsārin,* "worldling") typically argues that because we enjoy plenty of pleasurable experiences in the course of a lifetime, the yogic characterization of life as suffering is inaccurate. From a yogic perspective, this argument is flawed, because it does not spring from a particularly deep analysis of our existential situation. The more profound a person's discernment (*viveka*) is, the more he or she becomes sensitive to the omnipresence of suffering (*duhkha*) in the world. This is captured in the following aphorism.

2.15: PARINĀMA-TĀPA-SAMSKĀRA-DUHKHAIR GUNA-VRITTI-VIRODHĀC CA DUHKHAM EVA SARVAM VIVEKINAH

"Because of the suffering in the [continual] transformation [of the Cosmos], [in] the anguish [of life], [and in] the 'activators', and on account of the conflict between the movements of the *gunas,* everything is but suffering for the discerner."

2.16: HEYAM DUHKHAM ANĀGATAM

"[That which is] to be overcome is future suffering."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.15–2.16 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In aphorism 2.15, *duhkhaih* becomes *duhkhair* because of the following *g* sound, while *virodhāt* must be changed to *virodhāc* owing to the following *c* sound.

When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE ELIMINATION OF SUFFERING

With these aphorisms, we have come full circle. The elimination of suffering is the principal concern of the Yoga adept, and for suffering to terminate, the strange connection between Spirit and Cosmos must be severed. This is the work of Yoga's *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya,* as discussed in Lesson 1. The opening aphorism of the *Sāmkhya-Sūtra* (1.1) likewise states: "Now, the termination of the triple suffering is the supreme purpose of life." The threefold suffering is suffering caused by psychomental factors, by other creatures, and by fateful intervention: *ādhyātmika, ādhibhautika,* and *ādhidaivika.*

INNER VS. OUTER RENUNCIATION: A LESSON FROM THE GĪTĀ

āshrama

Before going on to considering the opposite of the darkness of ignorance, which is the luminosity of Spirit, I would like to briefly discuss the actual practice of dispassion. In earlier ages, many of India's sages believed that in order to cultivate dispassion, they had to leave everything behind not merely metaphorically but literally—family, home, business, and social obligations. They fled into the forest or thought out remote mountain caves. At one point, this trend became so popular that the Hindu lawmakers started to warn against premature renunciation and invented the social institution of the four stages of life (*āshrama*), which comprise:

(1) *brahmacarya*	—	stage of studentship
(2) *gārhasthya*	—	householder stage in which one embraces and fulfills all one's social obligations
(3) *vānaprasthya*	—	forest-dwelling stage, which, as the name suggests, coincides with one's retirement from most social obligations and focus on spiritual practice in relative seclusion
(4) *samnyāsa*	—	stage of complete renunciation when one roams freely and without attachment to anyone and anything, constantly immersed in the contemplation of the Ultimate Reality

The question arose how those who were unable to enter into the third or fourth stage of life could fulfill their various obligations without incurring a huge karmic debt, and a viable answer was provided in the form of the teachings of Karma-Yoga. A fundamental discussion of this approach can be found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* which makes an important distinction between inner (or metaphoric) renunciation and external (or literal) renunciation, *samnyāsa* vs. *tyāga* ("abandonment").

Dispassion (*vairāgya*) is first and foremost an inner attitude of nongrasping, of letting go of one's habitual attachments. It may or may not be accompanied by external actions, though very likely those who are inwardly dispassionate will tend toward simplicity in all things and not be preoccupied with amassing material wealth, social status, or power.

- Now read Essay #58 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapter 7 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

DISSPELLING THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE

In Lesson 1, I introduced an ancient invocation affirming our passage from darkness to light. The unenlightened mind is literally an endarkened mind, which, lacking true wisdom, fumbles about in the shadows of *samsāra*. A spiritual seeker is someone who has become aware of this unenviable condition and now yearns for Light, at first somewhat feebly but, as time goes by, with increasing intensity.

As should have become clear from the earlier discussion of the karmic web that we weave by our uninspected motivations (the *kleshas*), we have a great deal of self-inspection to do, as much of our mind is, like an iceberg, below the surface of consciousness. We can assist this process by the active visualization of light, which is the purpose of the following homework exercise.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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Suggested Yoga Practice
VISUALIZING LIGHT

1. With your eyes closed, sit quietly in your favorite meditation posture or in a comfortable chair and mentally commit to focusing on the following practice for at least 10 minutes.

2. Begin by taking a few deep breaths and consciously relaxing the muscles of your face, hands, arms, trunk, and legs.

3. Now imagine that you are sitting in bright sunlight, with the Sun's benign golden rays warming your skin. Next visualize that the golden light seeps through your skin to fill the space inside your body. As the light enters you, it melts away all your resistance. (If you cannot clearly visualize a golden light, you can picture it to be of pure white color.) Take your time with this part of the exercise, allowing the light to penetrate all corners of your body until your entire inner space is brightly illuminated.

4. Next focus your attention on the light illuminating specifically your chest/heart area. There should, however, be no strain in doing this, and your attention should be relaxed. If done correctly, this visualization will be accompanied by a basic mood of peacefulness and serenity.

5. Now visualize that with every inhalation, which should come naturally, you inhale more of the light, drawing it into your body and allowing it, with every exhalation, to carry away all negative energies and karmic obscurations. If done correctly, you should before long feel a great inner ease and purity.

6. Finally, dedicate the last minute of this exercise to consciously radiating light in all directions, especially from the front and chest area of your body, to share this healing, nurturing light with others. As you become more skilled at this, send this light to your family, friends, coworkers, and others, with the firm conviction that they will benefit from this transmission.

7. Practice this exercise daily for the next two weeks or longer, if it makes sense to you and feels right.

For Reflection

1. Do you believe that people are basically good or that our species is rather flawed? How does your particular belief affect your interactions with others? For instance, as a result of your belief, do you tend to trust or distrust people? Has your experience proven you right or wrong?

2. What is your reaction to the idea that even our thoughts have repercussions (i.e., karmic consquences)? Is your reaction primarily intellectual or emotional?

3. If you reject the belief in reincarnation, how do you explain that so many great masters have accepted it? If you accept it, how do account for the fact that we don't seem to remember anything about our past lives? In either case, how has your rejection or acceptance of this idea shaped your life?

4. How much of your life is devoted to avoiding discomfort and seeking pleasure? How easily can you tolerate discomfort? Do you get emotionally disturbed when things are not "just so," when they don't meet your expectations of how everything ought to be? In which area of life do you seek pleasure more than in any other? Which area matters to you the least in terms of the pleasure or comfort it provides?

5. Assuming that you have an ego, with which aspect of your life do you most identify? What are you most attached to? Your body (or looks) or your intellect? Your occupation, reputation, social status, family, or belongings? Put differently, which aspect are you most sensitive about when someone criticizes, slanders, or seeks to harm it? How do you explain (in terms of your particular personal history) your version of "I-am-ness"?

6. Which character trait in others do you most despise or reject? Dishonesty, vindictiveness, inflexibility, ruthlessness, competitiveness, etc.? Which traits in your own character do you find displeasing or deplorable? And what do you do about them?

7. What makes you tick? What is the guiding ideal of your life? Do you entertain such an ideal consciously? When you analyze your actual behavior, to what degree does it match the ideal you hold in your heart? Would others know that you live by that ideal?

8. Have you ever thought of, or attempted to, simplify your life? Do you own more things than you need? Do you perhaps find the number of your belongings burdensome? What could you

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

do to unload some of your "stuff"? How do your belongings shape your life, especially your inner life? Which of them give you comfort or peace of mind? Which do you regard as inessential but "nice"? Which of them would you absolutely want to take with you to an island that contains everything for your comfortable survival? Are you worried about what will happen to your belongings after your death? If so, why?

9. Contemplate the difference between pain and suffering. Are you particularly sensitive to physical pain? Or are you particularly sensitive to emotional pain? Do you tend to worry about contracting an illness and experiencing the pain that often comes with illness? Are you physically timid and inclined to avoid situations that you think might cause you pain? Do you tend to avoid situations that are emotionally challenging? How much energy do you invest in avoiding pain and discomfort? Do you acknowledge that fearful anticipation of painful or uncomfortable experiences is itself a form of suffering? If you are the hyperactive type who jumps first and then asks questions, perhaps taking needless risks, how do you understand your behavior in terms of the five causes-of-affliction?

10. Do you regard retirement as an opportunity to maximize pleasure and minimize discomfort? If you are not yet retired, how much thought and energy do you invest in ensuring you will have a good retirement? If you are retired, does your retirement correspond to your aspirations while preparing for it? Do you consider retirement as a "sacred" phase of life giving you an opportunity to step up your spiritual growth? Does it make sense to postpone the spiritual process until retirement?

11. Do you tend to feel uneasy about "digging around" in the more hidden chambers of your mind? Do you feel hesitant to find out what your real motivations and character traits are? Do you consider this kind of self-inquiry pointless or maybe even dangerous? Should we let "sleeping dogs" lie? Or do you think that we must fully inspect all facets of our mind and personality?

12. Looking at your life as a whole, when have you been happiest? What prevents you from feeling completely happy right now?

QUESTIONNAIRE 5

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. Which of the following terms means "suffering"? *(Check one.)*

(a) *klesha*
(b) *samsāra*
(c) *duhkha*
(d) *klishta*
(e) *sukha*

2. What is meant by *ānushravika-vishaya*? *(Check one.)*

(a) a visible thing
(b) an invisible thing
(c) a concealed thing
(d) a revealed thing

3. To which cause-of-affliction does gluttony *more specifically* belong? *(Check one.)*

(a) *avidyā*
(b) *asmitā*
(c) *rāga*
(d) *dvesha*
(e) *abhinivesha*

4. To which cause-of-affliction does racism *more specifically* belong? *(Check one*)

(a) *avidyā*
(b) *asmitā*
(c) *rāga*
(d) *dvesha*
(e) *abhinivesha*

5. What is the proper Sanskrit term for literal, external renunciation of things? *(Check one*)

(a) *tyāga*
(b) *vairāgya*
(c) *samnyāsa*
(d) *nyāsa*

6. What is the object that is being renounced in the higher form of renunciation? *(Check one*)

(a) I-am-ness
(b) the mind
(c) the senses
(d) the body as a whole
(e) the *gunas*
(f) the material world
(g) the subtle realms
(h) the Cosmos

7. What is meant by the technical term *(phala*)? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the karmic deposit in the unconscious
(b) the creation of karma through volition
(c) the reward of good karma
(d) karmic fruition

8. What is meant by *karma-āshaya*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the matrix of karmic seeds in the depth of the mind
(b) karmas that are active in the present lifetime
(c) the *klishta-vrittis*
(d) a subliminal activator
(e) the unconscious
(f) the *vāsanās*
(g) the *kleshas*

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

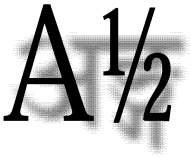
Lesson 6
The Eight-Limbed Path to Liberation

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To learn about the eight limbs of Patanjali's Yoga and appreciate how they represent an extensive program of self-purification and to begin to apply this insight to your life to overcome obstacles*

- An Outline of Patanjali's Eight-Limbed Path
- Understanding the Eight Limbs
- From Multiplicity to Simplicity
- Overcoming Your Addiction to Consensus Reality
- Jung and Patanjali
- Spiritual Crisis
- Spiritual Initiation and Discipleship
- The Guru: Dispeller of Darkness
- Patanjali and the Buddha's Eightfold Path
- Other Yogic Paths
- One Step at a Time
- Obstacles on the Path
- "Higher" Obstacles
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Understanding the Obstacles in Your Life
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 6

AN OUTLINE OF PATANJALI'S EIGHTFOLD PATH



anga

In Lesson 5, we learned about what Patanjali calls Kriyā-Yoga ("Yoga of Action"), consisting of the three practices of austerity (*tapas*), study (*svādhyāya*), and devotion to the Lord (*īshvara-pranidhāna*). He is, however, better known for his elaboration of the eight-limbed path (*ashta-anga-yoga*), which, as we will see, includes the practical elements of Kriyā-Yoga.

The eight-limbed path is in fact the most systematic representation of the yogic program available within Hinduism. Buddhism and Jainism have their own systematizations of the path, though Patanjali's model was adopted also by several Jaina Yoga authorities. In addition, we find it referred to in a number of Vedānta scriptures, which is indicative of its great practical usefulness in understanding the overall framework of the inward Odyssey from conditioned existence (*samsāra*) to the state of liberation (*kaivalya*).

It is not known for sure but, since the *Yoga-Sūtra* shows Buddhist influence, quite conceivable that the schema of eight limbs was modelled after the Buddhist eightfold path. Yogas of six, seven, fifteen, and more limbs are also to be found, but the *Yoga-Sūtra*'s well-known eight limbs convincingly capture the main phases or practice groups of the yogic process. As we will see in connection with the higher stages (see Lesson 11), Patanjali distinguishes between "outer limbs" (*bahir-anga*) and "inner limbs" (*antar-anga*). The former set comprises the first five practices, while the latter consists of the last three, which are considered higher stages.

2.28: YOGA-ANGA-ANUSHTHĀNĀD ASHUDDHI-KSHAYE JNĀNA-DĪPTIR Ā VIVEKA-KHYĀTEH

"Through the application of the limbs of Yoga, and with the dwindling of impurity, [there comes about] the radiance of knowledge, [which develops] up to the vision of discernment."

2.29: YAMA-NIYAMA-ĀSANA-PRĀNĀYĀMA-PRATYĀHĀRA-DHĀRANĀ-DHYĀNA-SAMĀDHAYO'SHTĀV ANGĀNI

"Moral discipline, self-restraint, posture, breath control, sense-withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and ecstasy are the eight limbs [of Yoga]."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.28–2.29 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

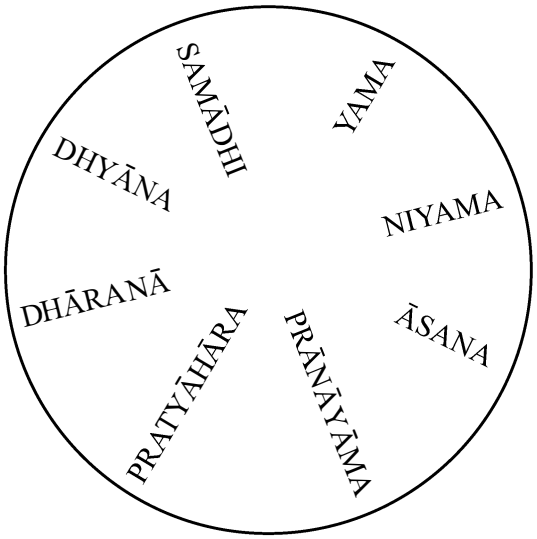
  NOTE: In 2.28, I have translated *jnāna* as "knowledge" rather than, as in my book, as "gnosis." It stands for a higher type of insight, as it occurs in the state of ecstasy. Also, the term *anushthāna* is here rendered as "application" instead of "performance." In the same aphorism, *dīptih* must be changed to *dīptir* owing to the following *ā* sound. In 2.29, I have translated *yama* and *niyama* respectively as "moral discipline" and "self-restraint" rather than, as in my book, as "restraint" and "observance." I have done so to achieve some consistency with the terminology adopted in my writings over the past several years. As I have stated before, I have also dropped the unpopular term "enstasy" for "ecstasy" in rendering the Sanskrit term *samādhi.* This aphorism also has an elided initial *a* sound in *ashtau* (*'shtau*), which must be changed to *ashtāv* because of the following *a* sound of *angāni.*

- Next read Essay #6 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

UNDERSTANDING THE EIGHT LIMBS

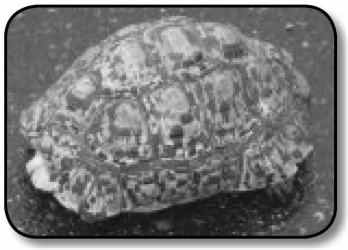
How are we to best understand Patanjali's eight-limbed framework. Often his eight limbs are understood as "stages," with one limb following upon another. But this is not quite correct. for instance, the five practices of moral discipline (*yama*) are not just a stepping-stones to self-restraint; rather, they are the foundation for all other practices. Similarly, the five practices of self-restraint (*niyama*) are not superseded by posture (*āsana*), the third limb, but are integral to it and all other practices. Already posture includes an element of sensory inhibition, the fourth limb. Likewise, how could ecstasy be possible without a stable posture? And so on.

Thus, the metaphor of a ladder consisting of eight steps is not convincing. It makes more sense to think of the eight limbs as integral and interdependent aspects of a single path. Graphically, this is best represented by the following circular arrangement:



yama	—	moral discipline
niyama	—	self-restraint
āsana	—	posture
prānāyāma	—	breath control
pratyāhāra	—	sense-withdrawal
dhāranā	—	concentration
dhyāna	—	meditation
samādhi	—	ecstasy

FROM MULTIPLICITY TO SIMPLICITY



Our lives are rather complex, and we have largely forgotten the virtue of simplicity. Yoga re-animates this virtue in us. It is a protracted pilgrimage that takes us from our familiar world of countless objects and relationships to an ever more simple experience of reality until we stand free as Spirit (*ātman, purusha*) itself. This Odyssey from the profane to the sacred, from the complex to the simple, can be understood as a process of increasing unification, which is the very essence of Yoga. It is a comprehensive exercise in *pratyāhāra,* or tortoise-like "withdrawal," at all levels of our coarse (physical) and subtle (mental) being. Another concept we can apply to this is "centering," which puts us in touch with our true nature, which is utterly simple, or single (*eka*).

◘ Now read Chapter 11 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

OVERCOMING YOUR ADDICTION TO CONSENSUS REALITY

samskāra

From a yogic perspective, we all are addicted to what the American psychologist Charles Tart calls "consensus reality"—our everyday world with its never-ending fare of distractions, be they pleasurable or otherwise, which has the quality of a common dream. Even though our experiences are frequently disappointing or flat, we nevertheless seem to be designed to repeat them over and over again, much like an addict who lives for the next hit. Our behavior, of course, is largely determined by those unconscious forces that Patanjali named "subliminal activators," or *samskāras.* The purpose of traditional Yoga is to disrupt and indeed end our curious attachment to worldly experiences. Step by step, the practices of Yoga are intended to wean us from our addiction to *samsāra* and accustom us to focusing the mind on our true nature, which is pure Awareness.

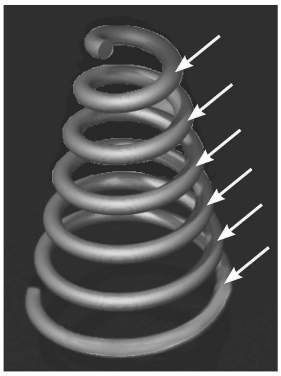
As I have mentioned before, the yogic *opus* can be understood as a comprehensive process of self-purification, or sattvification. As we develop our capacity for harmonizing our moral relationships, disciplining our physical, emotional, and mental tendencies, sitting still, breathing consciously, withdrawing our senses from their respective objects of attention, focusing the mind, deepening our contemplation, and, finally, becoming one with the object of meditative absorption, we become increasingly transparent to ourselves.

JUNG AND PATANJALI

Carl Jung had an ambivalent attitude toward Yoga. On the one hand, he clearly was fascinated with Yoga and admired its psychotechnology; on the other hand, however, he believed that the yogic program of converting the unconscious into consciousness was little more than a pipe-dream. Thus, he inclined to the view that Yoga was unsuitable for Westerners and promoted his own technique of "active imagination" as a kind of Western Yoga.

Jung's views on Yoga have often been criticized, especially by Hindu Yoga authorities sufficiently familiar with Western psychology but also by psychologists who did what Jung never did, which is to actually experiment with Yoga and experience its effects in their own body-mind.

Yoga does indeed seek to illuminate the unconscious completely, and it aims to do so by neutralizing even the last imprint on the mind, the last vestigial subliminal activator, at the most advanced level of supraconscious ecstasy (called *asamprajnāta-samādhi*). I will discuss this in Lesson 15, but it is important to realize from the outset that the yogic program involves this kind of deep-level cathartic process. The entire yogic path is designed to reprogram the conscious and unconscious mind and, in the end, transcend all mental programs. To accomplish this, Patanjali's path entails a re-education at all levels of our being—from the interpersonal to the personal and transpersonal aspects.



Psychologically, the yogic path is not so much a straight upward vector but a spiral that includes occasional backturns resulting from our personal inability to grow smoothly. I will talk about the obstacles on the path and how to overcome them shortly. Although there are certain fixed points of accomplishment along the path, each individual's progression from addiction to wholeness is quite unique. It is in the nature of a spiral coil that certain positions along it repeat themselves but always at a higher level (see arrows on the illustration). Thus, each time we encounter a similar experience or obstacles on the path, we bring to it a bigger perspective, that is, a better understanding.

☐ Now read Essay #19 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*.

Don't rush through the course!
Make your studying a yogic practice.

When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Almost universally, it requires a life crisis to prompt a person to reverse course and become committed to the spiritual path. This bespeaks our inherent lethargy (resulting from a preponderance of *tamas* in our personality), which is also one of the obstacles on the path. The first step is often the most difficult to take. As Martin Luther King remarked, we don't have to see the whole staircase to take the first step. A leap of intuition or faith will do. The action itself will teach us. In the case of the yogic path, there can be no harm in making a commitment to practice, however modest it may be. Yoga itself will be our teacher and reveal to us the next step and the next. Some 3,500 years ago, Prince Arjuna was at a place of crisis in his life, and he was fortunate to have a fully realized master—Krishna—by his side to give him wise counsel. But generally in situations of crisis, life forces our hand to decide which course to take, and then we must resort to and trust our innate wisdom.

Krishna instructing Arjuna in his war chariot

◘ Now read Chapter 9 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

SPIRITUAL INITIATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

When we have stepped onto the yogic path, the next momentous event on our spiritual journey is that of formal or information intiation by a qualified master, which places us into the fast current of the river of Yoga. Perhaps we will never have the opportunity to receive initiation (*dīkshā*), and then we must remember Krishna's words that on the yogic path, no effort is ever wasted. We must never give up but trust that our spiritual endeavors are definitely changing the template of our mind and thus create for us a better destiny. Sooner or later we will see the benevolent effects of our spiritual efforts also in this dense material realm.

◘ Now read Chapter 10 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

There are many *gurus,* like lamps in house after house, but hard to find, O Goddess, is the *guru* who lights up all like the Sun.

—*Kula-Arnava-Tantra* (13.104)

THE GURU: DISPELLER OF DARKNESS

guru

For initiation and discipleship to be possible, a qualified *guru* is needed. Since ancient Vedic times, the teacher has played a central role in spiritual life. Today, in the modern West, realized masters who can serve as trusted guides on the spiritual path are difficult to find. Certainly within the fold of Hindu Yoga, many students are forced to proceed on their own. In Buddhist Yoga, qualified teachers are more widely available, but even then the practitioner will face the challenge of finding just the right guide for himself or herself. Yet, it has been my experience that there is definite truth the age-old adage that when the student is ready, the teacher appears.

◘ Now read Essays #27–29 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

DANGEROUS FRIEND

Choosing a lama [*guru*] is not unlike choosing a lifelong marital partner. It is a choice in which one should exercise great care, great seriousness, and great passion. Yet at the beginning of one's interest in spirituality, the choice of a teacher can also reflect decision modes that are as ordinary as choosing a respectable suit of clothing. One must cut one's cloth according to one's means; which in this context would be applying open-hearted intelligence and utilizing the ground of experience to find out exactly who the lama might be, as an extraordinary human being . . . Milarepa said: "The day that I recognized my teacher as a Buddha, that was when I understood the nature of my own mind."

—Rig'dzin Dorje, *Dangerous Friend,* pp. 20, 23

PATANJALI AND THE BUDDHA'S EIGHTFOLD PATH

Generally, we don't think of Buddhism as a yogic path, but that is exactly what it is, and it is a form of Yoga that is very much older than Patanjali's system. What is more, Patanjali seems to have been inspired by some of the Buddhist teachings, notably those belonging to the branch of Mahāyāna, which was very popular in the early post-Christian era to which Patanjali seems to belong. In one aphorism (4.16), he even refutes a well-known Buddhist doctrine, which he probably knew from early Vijnānavāda sources, such as the *Prajnā-Pāramitā* texts. Be that as it may, Patanjali was undoubtedly aware of Buddhist Yoga, and it is conceivable that he modelled his eight-limbed Yoga after the Buddha's *ārya-ashtāngika-mārga,* or "noble eightfold path."

Both Patanjali and the Buddha make the moral disciplines the solid bedrock of spiritual practice, and both emphasize the need to discipline the mind through the cultivation of stringent meditation. The following diagram will give you a sense of the parallels and differences in approach between Patanjali's Yoga and the Buddha's Yoga:

1. right view (*samyag-drishti*) 2. right resolve (*samyak-samkalpa*) 3. right speech (*samyag-vācā*) 4. right conduct (*samyak-karmantā*) 5. right livelihood (*samyag-ājiva*)	1. moral discipline (*yama*)
6. right exertion (*samyag-vyayama*) 7. right mindfulness (*samyak-smriti*)	2. self-restraint (*niyama*) 3. posture (*āsana*) 4. breath control (*prānāyāma*) 5. sensory inhibition (*pratyāhāra*) 6. concentration (*dhāranā*)
8. right concentration (*samyak-samādhi*), which consists of eight stages of contemplation (Pali *jhāna*) beyond which is the reality of *nirvāna,* or liberation	7. meditation (*dhyāna*) 8. ecstasy (*samādhi*)

☐ Now read Essays #15–16 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

OTHER YOGIC PATHS

The spirituality of Yoga, which almost universally involves a program of progressive practices, lends itself perfectly to the metaphor of a path (*patha*) or way (*mārga*). Like pathways through the countryside, the path of Yoga has its share of ups and downs, windy curves, and treacherous stretches. All the while, however, the road is heading farther up the slope until the summit of liberation, or enlightenment, is reached. Some schools of Yoga, notably Tantra, favor a more direct and speedy approach while others trust in a slower but safer route of ascent. The notion of a path belongs to what I have called spiritual "verticalism," which conceptualizes the yogic process as a gradual inner transformation taking the practitioner from a "lower" level of experiences to ever "higher" realizations.

The following are considered the major **branches** of Hindu Yoga:

1. Karma-Yoga—the past of self-transcending action and service
2. Bhakti-Yoga—the path of devotional self-surrender to the Supreme (God, Goddess)
3. Rāja-Yoga—the path of meditative absorption
4. Hatha-Yoga—the path of vigorous bodily transmutation
5. Tantra-Yoga—the path of visualization and ritual
6. Jnāna-Yoga—the path of recognizing one's innate enlightenment through wisdom (*jnāna*)

All approaches are grounded in inner renunciation, or dispassion (*vairāgya*), and all have liberation as their final goal. Karma-Yoga allows for the greatest involvement with ordinary life, while Jnāna-Yoga is intended for the sage who has renounced the world and is capable of focusing his or her attention exclusively on the spiritual process itself. Bhakti-Yoga is monotheistic worship and often combines with Karma-Yoga. Rāja-Yoga revolves around mental discipline and calls for a considerable degree of concentration. Hatha-Yoga is virtually unique in its orientation, making the body the vehicle of transformation. Some schools of this branch of Yoga regard Hatha-Yoga merely as a ladder to the royal road of Rāja-Yoga, but others insist that Hatha-Yoga is a fully integrated path that on its own can lead to liberation. Tantra-Yoga also utilizes the physical body but does so primarily through its focus on ritual in conjunction with meditative visualization. In comparison with the first five approaches, Jnāna-Yoga comes closest to the ideal of a pathless path, which is also known as the "direct" or "sudden" approach to spiritual realization, because it starts with the firm assumption that enlightenment is the case already and that we must merely rediscover it. Some schools of Tantra-Yoga also promote this ideal.

It is good to bear the above distinctions in mind when pondering Patanjali's Classical Yoga. In real life, Yoga is often seen to be a creative mix of various approaches, and even many masters of Jnāna-Yoga have taught elements of Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga.

- Now read Chapter 1 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.
- Next read Essay #13 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

ONE STEP AT A TIME

When I was in my twenties and still in a great hurry to achieve spiritual realization, I once asked a wise old relative to tell me what he thought the purpose of life was? He looked at me for a moment and then quietly said: "To put one foot in front of the other." It took me many years to figure out exactly what he had meant and that his answer was spot on.

We must not succumb to "mentalizing" the path but actually walk it in every moment and in any situation. Sometimes neophytes think they are being very "spiritual" when in reality they are merely indulging in conventional egoic behavior that they managed to make look or sound like Yoga. For instance, doing yogic postures regularly every day is nice but not in itself spiritual. To qualify as Yoga, our postures must be done for the sake of self-transcendence and self-transformation, that is, with liberation in mind. Similarly, to fast, diet, go on retreats, or even be a good person is wonderful but not in itself spiritual. We can do all these things for rather conventional, worldly reasons (to be healthy, fit, or well liked). In other words, unless our ultimate concern is of a spiritual nature, even our finest behavior still only expresses the attitude of spiritual materialism.

This faulty attitude is widespread and also quite difficult to identify in oneself. It is likely to stay with even the most well-intentioned practitioner for a long time. To uproot it, we must cultivate great discernment (*viveka*), which takes time. Thus, all we can do is take one step at a time, admit our slip-ups, and with great enthusiasm start again on that narrow Yellow Brickroad that leads to liberation.

If we hurry on the yogic path, we are bound to stumble and bypass important aspects of inner growth. If, out of fear or laziness, our steps are too hesitant, we not merely retard our spiritual development but might halt it altogether. On busy motorways where the speed limit is high, you will sometimes see a traffic sign that forbids you to drive below a certain speed, as this would be dangerous. We ought to steer clear of both Prometheus's boundless will for action and Hamlet's neurotic indecisiveness. Taking the middle path in all things is generally the best policy. Above all, we must become sensitive to our motivations. Why do we feel we have to rush? Or why do we delay the inevitable next step? This belongs to the realm of the causes of affliction, the *kleshas,* which we considered in Lesson 5.

The biggest obstacle is the mind shirking away from an obstacle.

OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

antarāya

Whenever we attempt anything worthwhile, we must be prepared to encounter difficulties—either difficulties arising from the outside world or those arising from within our own mind. In Yoga, it is generally the latter kinds of challenge that we must face squarely. As we re-mould the mind, we must fully expect resistance at times. After all, we are attempting to dismantle long-established karmic patterns as well as long-cherished but nonetheless negative attitudes and notions. These difficulties, as Patanjali puts it, are potential distractions and thus obstacles or hindrances (*antarāya*) on the path.

1.30: VYĀDHI-STYĀNA-SAMSHAYA-PRAMĀDA-ĀLASYA-AVIRATI-BHRĀNTI-DARSHANA-ALABDHA-BHŪMIKATVA-ANAVASTHITATVĀNI CITTA-VIKSHEPĀS TE'NTARĀYĀH

"Sickness, lethargy, doubt, heedlessness, sloth, dissipation, false vision, non-attaining of the stages [of Yoga] and instability [in these stages] are the distractions of consciousness; these are the obstacles."

1.31: DUHKHA-DAURMANASYA-ANGAM-EJAYATVA-SHVĀSA-PRASHVĀSĀ VIKSHEPA-SAHABHUVAH

"Pain, depression, tremor of the limbs, as well as [wrong] inhalation and exhalation are accompanying [symptoms] of the distractions."

1.32: TAT-PRATISHEDHA-ARTHAM EKA-TATTVA-ABHYĀSAH

"In order to counteract these [distractions], [the *yogin* should resort to] the practice [of concentration on] a single principle."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.30–1.30 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 1.30, I have translated *styāna* here with "lethargy" rather than its equivalent "languor." Grammatically, there is another elided *a* sound in *te'ntarāyāh* for *te antarāyāh.*

- Now read Essay #34 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

"HIGHER" OBSTACLES

Even at the more advanced stages of Yoga, obstacles may arise. Patanjali specifically mentions five of them, which from one point of view can be seen as attainments but from a higher perspective represent stumbling blocks (*upasarga*). On the yogic path, anything that distracts the practitioner from a vigorous pursuit of liberation is regarded as a hurdle to be overcome.

3.36: TATHĀ PRĀTIBHA-SHRĀVANA-VEDANĀ-ĀDARSHA-ĀSVĀDA-VĀRTĀ JĀYANTE

"Thence occur flashes-of-illumination [in the sensory areas of] hearing, sensing, sight, taste, and smell."

3.37: TE SAMĀDHĀV UPASARGĀ VYUTTHĀNE SIDDHAYAH

"These are obstacles to ecstasy [but] attainments in the waking state."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.36–3.37 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: I have opted to translate *vyutthāna* here more literally as "emergence/emergent (state) rather than as "waking (state)," as in my book. This concept complements the notion of *nirodha* or "control," implying the mind's turning away from the outer world and manifesting the inward-facing consciousness (*pratyak-cetana*). The locative *samādhau* must be changed to *samādhāv* because of the following *u* sound. The plural *upasargāh* looses its *visarga* (*h*) because of the following *v* sound.

Diligent concentration or meditation practice can lead to supersensory activity (*prātibha*). Thus a practitioner might attain the ability to smell the scent of even a moderately fragrant flower several rooms away. In his fine book *Ruling Your World,* Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche relates how his father, Chögyam Trungpa, had smelled the first car he ever saw days before it actually arrived. Some *yogins* have telescopic vision and are able to identify a person from miles away. Such paranormal abilities may be fascinating or at times even useful, but for the practitioner who wishes to cultivate, for instance, the ecstatic state (*samādhi*) they are hindrances. In the final analysis, any capacity or experience that prevents further spiritual growth is undesirable. Hence it is best not to invest time and energy in cultivating such abilities or experiences. Even ecstasy can become an obstacle when the practitioner starts fixating on it and the pleasure it affords. Unlike ecstasy, enlightenment is not a temporary state of mind or experience. It transcends the senses and the mind. To summarize, higher obstacles are still obstacles! For emotional obstacles, see Lesson 12.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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Prajnā-Pāramitā,
"Mother of the Buddhas"

Suggested Yoga Practice

UNDERSTANDING THE OBSTACLES IN YOUR LIFE

This is an exercise in stocktaking. For at least one hour, consider and list on a piece of paper all the major and minor hurdles that you would have to overcome in order to make your spiritual practice into a thriving concern. Take your time. If one session is not enough, take another one, and another. Your consideration ought to be in depth. Then, for the next two weeks, spent at least 15 minutes every other day examining in detail one of the obstacles you have been able to identify. Ask yourself the following questions:

(a) Have I identified the obstacles correctly? (For instance, am I really shy or am I actually fearful? Am I really competitive or am I actually ruthless? Am I really lazy or am I actually afraid?)

(b) How do I feel about the obstacle I have identified? (Am I feeling ashamed, guilty, or indifferent?)

(c) When does this obstacle typically present itself? (When I am alone, with others, or when I feel threatened or pressured? etc.)

(d) When did I first notice this obstacle in my life? (In my childhood, after a particular event, or only engaging the yogic process? etc.)

(e) How have I typically dealt with this obstacle thus far, if at all? (Have I tried to tackle it directly or indirectly, or have I avoided addressing it and, if so, why? What was the outcome of my efforts?)

(f) In what way does this obstacle undermine my spiritual efforts? (Be as specific as possible!)

(g) How confident am I that I can overcome this obstacle?

(h) Should I seek someone's help with tackling this obstacle? (Sometimes it helps to "speak out loud" to someone with a sympathetic ear, especially if he or she is also on the spiritual path.)

(i) Am I prepared to initiate a counteraction in order to overcome this obstacle? (If so, it might be good—in front of a trusted spiritual friend—to formally declare your intent to overcome a particular obstacle by initiating a new pattern of behavior. Be modest in your goals; don't overreach. You can pledge to behave differently even for a single day. . .)

A better word for "obstacle" is "opportunity."

For Reflection

1. What triggered your interest in Yoga? Was it a life crisis? If not, did you experience such a crisis after taking up Yoga? How has this affected your thinking about life and death?

2. What do you think/feel about the *guru* tradition? Do you think it old-fashioned and not appropriate for modern times? Should it be suitably modified? Have you ever considered "apprecenticing" with a flesh-and-blood *guru* or have the widely circulated stories of false or failed *gurus* prevented you from taking such a step? Do you feel you don't need a human teacher at all? How do you relate to authority in general? (Here you might reflect on your relationship with your parents.) Do you think you would make a bad student? Or are you waiting for the "right" *guru* to come along? What would you find most difficult in having a relationship with a traditional-type teacher? While your concerns might be perfectly legitimate, do you nevertheless detect in them a sense of conventionality that is merely self-protective rather than based in wisdom?

3. In bygone days, people would travel vast distances to receive spiritual teachings. What kind of effort are you prepared to make? Or do you feel that the teachings you are able to glean from books will meet your spiritual needs at this stage? Do you think there is something in the saying that "you get what you pay for"? Is a worthwhile teaching inevitably connected with hardship in obtaining it, or is this merely a romantic idea?

4. How do you regard the teachings you have been able to obtain either by reading a book or from a teacher? Do you consider them truly precious, or do you relate to them more casually, as you might relate to the knowledge imparted to you in school or during training at work? In other words, do you consider spiritual teachings to be special? If so, why? If not, why not?

5. How do you deal with life crises? Do you tend to be "cool, calm, and composed," or do you tend to "loose your head"? Do crises make you more thoughtful about life? Do you ask: "Why me?" or "What lesson am I meant to learn?" Or do you try to forget them as quickly as possible? When you are sick, do you tend to be a "good" patient or are you likely to be impatient and cranky? Does this pattern during sickness show itself at other times?

6. How fine tuned are your senses? Which sense is most highly developed in you? How has this helped or hindered you in your life?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

7. How is your breathing in this moment? Deep, slow, and rhythmic or shallow, fast, and uneven? In what way is your breathing mirrored by your mind? Ponder the reasons for your present way of breathing and its mental correlate.

8. Do others consider you an extremist or volatile? Or do they see you as even-tempered, balanced, and harmonious? In what way, if at all, have you cultivated the middle path in your life? Do you get easily bored when life is not "exciting" and do you tend to "liven things up" in order to stave off boredom? Or do you enjoy peace and quiet at all times and get flustered when life becomes too hectic around you? Or are you able to remain calm and still even in a busy and noisy environment?

9. Do you tend to drive slowly and defensively or do you like to speed, perhaps even with a certain recklessness? Have you ever caused a traffic accident and, if so, what has it taught you? Are you tolerant of other, crazy drivers or do you get upset with them? What would you have to do to be present as a "blessing force" behind the wheel?

10. Do other people consider you rash or indecisive? (Don't rely on your own judgment here!) Do you agree with their assessment. If not, why do you think others' perception is what it is? Is there at least some truth in it? If you are rash, what could you do to change? If you are indecisive, how could you go about altering this character trait?

11. Are you "bubbly" or on the "dour-faced" side? In your estimate, how does your particular self-presentation affect others? Have you ever received negative feedback about your personality and, if so, were you merely upset and defensive, or did you try to make changes in light of the criticism?

12. How is your own opinion or criticism of others colored by your personality? Do you tend to temper your thoughts and remarks to others in light of the knowledge you have about your own character? Does your criticism tend to be blunt or do you typically prefer to "beat around the bush"? Or are you more likely to keep your opinions to yourself in order to avoid conflict? Do you regard your typical attitude in such matters as a weakness or a virtue? What do your family members and friends think?

13. What would you have to do to be the kind of *yogin/yoginī* you can look up to? Does your self-image match your spiritual ideal? If not, what steps would take you there?

QUESTIONNAIRE 6

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What does *anushthāna* mean? *(Check one)*

(a) application
(b) effort
(c) grace
(d) practice
(e) enthusiasm

2. What does *samsāra* mean? *(Check one*)

(a) connection
(b) subliminal activator
(c) phenomenal world
(d) harmony

3. If the Buddha founded Buddhist Yoga, who founded Hindu Yoga? *(Check one)*

(a) unknown
(b) Patanjali
(c) Vyāsa
(d) Krishna
(e) Shiva

4. What are the important differences between Hindu and Buddhist Yoga? *(Check one or more)*

(a) Hindu Yoga is more systematic
(b) Buddhist Yoga rejects a belief in a Supreme Being (God)
(c) Hindu Yoga authorities believe in karma and reincarnation
(d) Buddhist Yoga relies on reasoning
(e) Hindu Yoga recognizes many deities (*devatā*)
(f) Buddhist Yoga rejects extreme asceticism
(g) Hindu Yoga is essentially monastic
(h) Buddhist Yoga is essentially Tantric

5. What do the various branches of Hindu Yoga have in common? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) the path
(b) the goal
(c) the moral disciplines
(d) posture practice
(e) breath control
(f) ecstasy
(g) the metaphysical framework
(h) the spirit of dispassion
(i) the spirit of discernment
(j) the doctrine of karma
(k) the idea that life is suffering
(l) emphasis on self-discipline

6. What is meant by "sudden" path? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) enlightenment happens spontaneously without preparatory work
(b) enlightenment is a matter of grace
(c) enlightenment occurs abruptly through initiation
(d) enlightenment occurs suddenly when the mind is ripe for it after due preparation

7. What is another name for Tantra-Yoga? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) Karma-Yoga
(b) Bhakti-Yoga
(c) Neo-Tantra
(d) Laya-Yoga
(e) Hatha-Yoga
(f) Integral Yoga

8. What is meant by *adhidaivika-duhkha*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) suffering caused by higher beings
(b) suffering caused by physical accidents
(c) suffering caused by the faulty application of Yoga
(d) suffering caused by natural forces
(e) suffering caused by one's mind

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 7
Solid Foundations: The Moral Disciplines

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand the moral disciplines of Yoga and to examine how they apply in your own life*

- The Great Vow of the Five Moral Disciplines
- Nonharming
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Timely Countermeasures
- Truthfulness
- Nonstealing
- The Idea of Ownership
- Chastity
- A Note on Tantra
- Greedlessness
- Conspicuous Consumption
- Voluntary Simplicity
- Moral Vows and Pledges
- Jaina Vows
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Responsible Living
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 7

THE GREAT VOW OF THE FIVE MORAL DISCIPLINES

mahāvrata

All eight limbs (*anga*) of Patanjali's Yoga are important, but the moral disciplines (*yama*) are truly foundational. Hence he describes them first and also speaks of them as constituting the "great vow" (*mahāvrata*), which is universally applicable.

"The external disciplines, or *yamas*," observes Chip Hartranft in his fine commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtra*, "are the way we yoke ourselves in relation to the world. This includes not only objects but also beings. Thus, the *yamas* guide our actions toward the benefit of all life. However, the "great vow" is not so much altruistic as practical . . . for the *yamas* benefit the individual at least as much as society. . ." (p. 33)

2.30: AHIMSĀ-SATYA-ASTEYA-BRAHMACARYA-APARIGRAHĀ YAMĀH

"Nonharming, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, greedlessness are the [moral] disciplines."

2.31: JĀTI-DESHA-KĀLA-SAMAYA-ANAVACCHINNĀH SARVA-BHAUMĀ MAHĀVRATAM

"[These apply] in all spheres, irrespective of birth, place, time and circumstance, [and they constitute] the great vow."

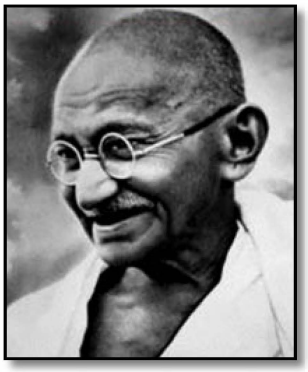
- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.30–2.31 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In this course, the term *yama* is translated as "[moral] discipline" rather than, following my book, as "restraint"—a change of mind on my part. Both renderings are technically correct. In aphorism 2.31, the concept of *mahāvrata* or "great vow" is strongly reminscent of Jainism, where the taking of vows plays an important role in the moral life of the Jaina monastics. In 2.30, the plural nominative *aparigrahāh* becomes *aparigrahā* owing to the following soft consonant *y*. The same rule applies to *bhaumāh/bhaumā* in aphorism 2.31.

- Next read Essays #39–40 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

NONHARMING

If the moral disciplines are the foundation of all other limbs of the yogic path, then nonharming (*ahimsā*) can be regarded as the foundation of all the moral disciplines. In other words, nonharming is the solid base on which the entire house of Yoga is built. No one has championed the virtue of nonharming more in modern times than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as the "Mahatma" (or "Great Soul"). He used the word "nonviolence" for *ahimsā,* but nonharming conveys a more comrehensive attitude of which nonviolence is a special case. In his autobiography, Gandhi writes about nonviolence as follows:



"Mahatma" Gandhi

ahimsā

> *Ahimsa* is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of *himsa* [violence]. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward *himsa.* The very fact of his living—eating, drinking and moving about—necessarily involves some *himsa,* destruction of life, be it ever so minute. A votary of *ahimsa* therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest crature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of *himsa*. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion, but he can never become entirely free from outward *himsa.*
>
> —*An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, p. 349

MAHATMA GANDHI

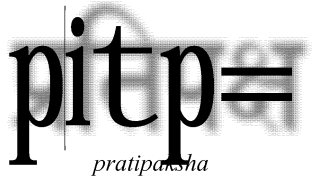
M. K. "Mahatma" Gandhi (1869–1948), a lawyer by profession, is remembered as the "Father" of modern India, which achieved political independence from Great Britain in 1947. Gandhi demonstrated that it is possible to struggle for political freedom without resorting to violence. He named his approach, which involved civil disobedience, *satyagraha* (meaning literally "grasping the truth"). His method has inspired other great leaders, notably the Dalai Lama, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. Gandhi, who admitted to finding great solace in reading and contemplating the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* best illustrates the heroic orientation of the *karma-yogin,* the practitioner of self-transcending action.

2.35: AHIMSĀ-PRATISHTHĀYĀM TAT-SAMNIDHAU VAIRA-TYĀGAH

"When [the *yogin*] is grounded in nonharming, [all] enmity ceases in his presence."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.35 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
- Next read Essays #41–43 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapter 12 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

TIMELY COUNTERMEASURES



What happens when we fail to live up to our own moral standards? From a yogic viewpoint, there will undoubtedly be karmic consequences, but instead of lamenting our slip-up and compounding it by indulging in guilt feelings, we ought to restore our moral integrity as quickly as possible by taking appropriate countermeasures (*pratipaksha*).

2.33: VITARKA-BHĀDHANE PRATIPAKSHA-BHĀVANAM

"For repelling unwholesome-deliberation (*vitarka*), [the *yogin* should pursue] the cultivation of [their] opposites."

2.34 VITARKĀ HIMSĀ-ĀDAYAH KRITA-KĀRITA-ANUMODITĀ LOBHA-KRODHA-MOHA-PŪRVAKĀ MRIDU-MADHYA-ADHIMĀTRĀ DUHKHA-AJNĀNA-ANANTA-PHALĀ ITI PRATIPAKSHA-BHĀVANAM

"The unwholesome-deliberations, [such as] harming *et cetera*, [whether] done, caused to be done or approved, [whether] arising from greed, anger or infatuation, [whether] modest, medium or excessive—[these find their] unending fruition in ignorance and sorrow; thus [the *yogin* should devote himself to] the cultivation of [their] opposites."

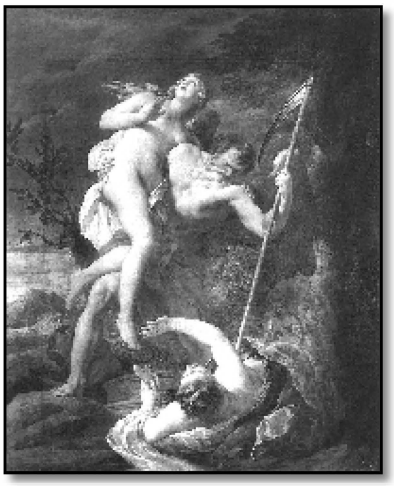
- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.33–2.34 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Here the term *vitarka* has a negative connotation, as opposed to the use of this word in connection with the *samādhi* state where it denotes a type of spontaneous thought (*pratyaya*) that cannot be considered a *vritti* and also does not disrupt the ecstatic flow of consciousness. In aphorism 2.34, the plural nominative *vitarkāh* becomes *vitarkā* because of the following *h* sound.

TRUTHFULNESS

A society based on lies rather than truthfulness would not survive for long. Our modern civilization comes as close to moral corruption as is possible without complete collapse occurring. Just how widespread lying and deceit have become has been addressed repeatedly in the sociological, psychological, and religious literature. I have given our own society's moral failure a great deal of attention in my book *Yoga Morality*.

A whole library could be written about humanity's curious inability to maintain moral integrity in a consistent and sustained manner, but it is more important and beneficial to pay attention to our own personal moral practice or the lack thereof. Patanjali's rigorous code both challenges us and helps us stay focused on what matters.



Time saving Truth from Falsehood, painting by François Lemoyne

Next read Essay #47 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*.

2.36: SATYA-PRATISHTHĀYĀM KRIYĀ-PHALA-ĀSHRAYATVAM

"When [the *yogin*] is grounded in truthfulness, action [and its] fruition depend [on him]."

satya

Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.36 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*.

Truth always rests with the minority, and the minority is always stronger than the majority, because the minority is generally formed by those who really have an opinion, while the strength of a majority is illusory, formed by the gangs who have no opinion—and who, therefore, in the next instant (when it is evident that the minority is the stronger) assume its opinion . . . while Truth again reverts to a new minority.

—Søren Kierkegaard, nineteenth-century Danish philosopher

NONSTEALING

Theft is considered a crime in most traditional and modern societies. But there also is a kind of stealing that is not labeled criminal but is nonetheless morally reprehensible, and modern people indulge in it quite frequently: Taking more than one needs and thus depriving others of what they might need or would enjoy. This sort of behavior lies between theft and greed (*parigraha*), and I will discuss it in conjunction with the moral virtue of greedlessness (*aparigraha*).

For example, if we are accustomed to eating nutritious food, how much do we need to eat before our consumption becomes thievery? Americans today consume an average of 3800 calories per day, which is 500 calories more than in 1970. Little wonder that over 60 percent of American adults are overweight. How many pairs of shoes, outfits, or pieces of furniture can we own before the word "thievery" applies? How many hundreds of thousands or billions of dollars can we accumulate before we commit theft? Consumerism, as I will argue shortly, inherently violates the virtue of nonstealing.

2.37: ASTEYA-PRATISHTHĀYĀM SARVA-RATNA-UPASTHĀNAM

"When [the *yogin*] is grounded in nonstealing, all [kinds of] jewels appear [for him]."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.37 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: If you prefer a nonmaterialist interpretation, *ratna* here could also stand for spiritual treasure. As the *yogin* overcomes the vice of stealing, he discovers the world of inner riches.

THE IDEA OF OWNERSHIP

Some traditional societies had no notion of personal property. Resources were to be shared by all. Modern societies, by contrast, revolve around the notion of ownership and personal wealth. They even have made the fatal assumption that human beings "own" Planet Earth and therefore are entitled to ransack it at will, never mind the consquences to other species. Not surprisingly, we are now experiencing what most biologists have come to call the Sixth Mass Extinction, with tens of thousands of entire species becoming extinct every year! At the very least, we have proven ourselves to be inept property managers. It would be much better, though, if we were to think of our own species as one among many, and that given our intelligence we ought to be especially responsible.

CHASTITY

brahmacarya

The *yogin* is eager to carefully regulate his physical and emotional energies so as not to squander his vitality but deploy it intelligently in the great *opus* of inner transformation. Thus he is particularly motivated to harness his sexual appetite, which is the area of great energy "leakage" in the ordinary person. The *yogin* understands that the pleasure afforded by sexual activity is a mere trickle by comparison with the bliss experienced in the state of ecstasy (*samādhi*). Patanjali, who favored asceticism, understood *brahmacarya* as complete sexual abstinence, but other Yoga authorities made appropriate allowances for so-called householders (*grihasthin*). Thus it is best to translated *brahmacarya* as "chastity," which also takes due note of the fact that this virtuous practice has a mental-spiritual component.

2.38: BRAHMACARYA-PRATISHTHĀYĀM VĪRYA-LABHAM

"When [the *yogin*] is grounded in chastity, [great] vitality is acquired."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.38 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
- Next read Chapter 13 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?.*

Chastity, to say the least, is not a virtue that is prized in our contemporary secular society. Here and there a few religiously motivated people endeavor to uphold this ideal, but they are often regarded as eccentric or even psychologically warped. Mainstream culture sees no value in chastity or celibacy, because it subscribes to an untrammeled hedonism: "Do what *feels* good." Or equally bad: "Do what you want." Yoga morality espouses a saner ideal: "Do what *is* good. Do as wisdom dictates."

The question of sexual economy or complete sexual abstinence is a considerable stumbling-block for many Western Yoga practitioners. Traditional *gurus,* who stand for the age-old moral principles taught in Yoga, often underestimate the moral chaos that engulfs their Western students and overestimate their willingness and capacity to control this aspect of their life. Hence there is a fair amount of discontent, confusion, and also unwholesome repression surfacing in *guru*-oriented groups.

Give me chastity and continence, only not yet.

—St. Augustine
Confessions (VIII.7)

For most people in good health and with normal vitality, the sex urge is the most powerful of the physical drives, which is precisely why Yoga and other spiritual traditions have sought to bring it under the control of the cerebrum. The energy it represents is enormous. After all, Nature designed it to keep the human species going, and hence also made the sexual act so pleasurable. Looking deeper into the mystery of sexual energy, the Yoga masters of yore recognized it to be a variation of the life force itself, which can be deployed either to further Nature's evolutionary goals or the involutionary goal of spiritual growth to the point of Self-realization, or liberation.

The sexual urge is the life force manifesting at the level of the second psychoenergetic center (or *svādhishthāna-cakra*). There are five major centers above it, with the thousand-petaled center (*sahasrāra-cakra*) at the top of the head being the secret portal to liberation. This teaching, which was first expressed in the most ancient *Upanishads,* is common to most schools of Yoga. We may safely assume that Patanjali, too, subscribed to it, though his aphorisms only hint at his knowledge of the *cakras* and *nādīs.*

The so-called "brahmic fissure" (*brahma-rāndhra*) at the crown of the head is for virtually all *yogins* the preferred exit point of the mind both at the moment of death and in the most profound state of meditation leading to unexcelled ecstasy (*samādhi*). To break through this hidden "gate" (*dvāra*), the practitioner must marshall all the psychomental energy he can, and this means preventing that energy from leaking through the lower psychophysical centers, notably the *svādhishthāna-cakra.*

◘ Next read Essays #69–70 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

A NOTE ON TANTRA

Tantra, or Tantra-Yoga, is often confused with "spiritualized" sexuality, and in Western countries is widely peddled as a thinly disguised form of sexual hedonism. Yet, authentic Tantra, which may or may not include sexual practices, always emphasizes that we must transcend our attachment to sexual pleasure (and conventional pleasure of any kind) in order to realize the ever-blissful singular Reality, which is our true nature.

Ordinary pleasure is indeed a stepped-down version of that bliss, but by placing our attention on it rather than bliss, we merely shortchange ourselves. Of course, the realization of bliss demands the kind of self-discipline, which few pleasure seekers are able to muster. Westernized Tantra, which I have dubbed "Neo-Tantra," is an unfortunate caricature of authentic Tantra, which is possibly India's most sophisticated spiritual tradition.

GREEDLESSNESS

Hell has three gates—lust, anger, and greed," states the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (16.21). Our modern societies are riddled with the problems arising from all three vices. While lust and anger are all too obvious, greed is both more hidden and at the same time more widespread. It could be said to be modern civilization's shadow, and it comes in the form of overconsumption. The *yogin* knows that money and things predictably fail to make us happy, and also that we cannot take anything with us when we die. Amazingly enough, the conventional, ego-driven individual typically lacks this simple but essential wisdom and spends an inordinate amount of time and energy in accumulating or preserving wealth and "stuff."

2.39: APARIGRAHA-STHAIRYE JANMA-KATHAMTĀ-SAMBODHAH

"When [the *yogin*] is steadied in greedlessness, [he secure] knowledge of the wherefore of [his] birth(s)."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.39 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Consumerism, which equates the acquisition of goods and consumption with happiness, is the single most important cause of worldwide inequality between the poor and the rich and also of environmental devastation. One fifth of humanity lives in severe poverty and without access to safe drinking water, while the wealthy and incredibly wasteful nations exploit and squander Earth's resources. One fifth of the human population (in the wealthy countries) is responsible for nearly 90 percent of private consumer expenditure! It takes roughly 30 acres of land to sustain each U.S. citizen as opposed to a little over 15 acres for each European citizen and 5 acres for each citizen of Ethiopia.

◘ Next read Essays #44–45 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

"For greed, all of nature is too small."
—Seneca

Humanity is undoubtedly teetering on the brink of self-destruction. We have polluted land, air, and water, and both overpopulation and the extravagant lifestyle of the developed nations has led to a host of planetwide problems that are now seriously impacting on poorer countries and soon will also impinge on the wealthy nations. The consquences of global warming, climatologists have finally started to warn us, will be far more severe than anyone had predicted.

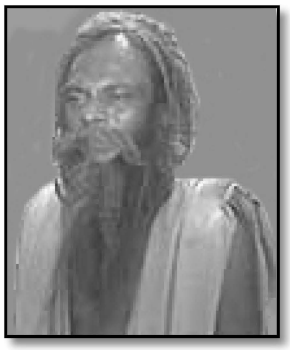
Thus, the time for adjusting our lifestyle to one of greater simplicity has definitely come if we want to avoid much personal suffering. I remember reading Duane Elgin's book *Voluntary Simplicity* when it was first published back in 1981, and it seemed then already that it was a somewhat belated warning. While astute observers of the world crisis are agreed that collectively we are about to reap the unenviable harvest of our carefree (or, I should say, uncaring) attitude toward Nature and fellow humans, we can still make changes in our own personal mindset and lifestyle to prepare for the inevitable. I am not talking about a little adjusting here and there but a significant change in the way we live, work, and consume. As spiritual practitioners, we now have the unique opportunity to actually live according to spiritual principles.

In 2001, *Yes!* magazine published Elgin's essay "The Garden of Simplicity" in which he spelled out some of the key elements of the "new" approach to a simplified lifestyle. Here are the highlights:

1. We must become fully aware of the influence of consumer culture on us and learn to make deliberate choices that do not support consumerism. In other words, we must assume responsibility for what we purchase and where we invest our money, favoring "green" organizations and businesses.
2. We must adopt a compassionate path of reconciliation with other people and beings, or what has also been called a path of inclusivity. This entails looking at how our food consumption causes untold suffering to animals.
3. We must limit our consumption to avoid further environmental destruction and learn to live far more frugally.
4. We must unclutter our lives to avoid needless distraction and cultivate what Elgin calls "soulful" simplicity, that is, give priority to spiritual values.

None of these recommendations would surprise a *yogin* or *yoginī,* but I do appreciate that they will challenge or even upset most people. Yet, is it not better to learn to live by sound principles voluntarily now rather than have them imposed on us by sheer necessity later on? The clock is definitely ticking.

MORAL VOWS AND PLEDGES



Ludkan Baba

In bygone ages, it was customary to initiate a significant spiritual endeavor by taking a vow (*vrata*). The great contemporary practitioners of *tapas* in India, whose ranks are rapidly thinning out, still honor this age-old custom. One of these *tapasvins* is Ludkan Baba (born Mohan Singh), the "Rolling Saint," who in 1994 vowed to roll on the ground all the way from Ratlam in Pakistan to the shrine of the Goddess Vaishno Devi in Jammu, Kashmir—a 2,485-mile-long journey. He accomplished this extraordinary feat in eight months, rolling every day along busy asphalt highways, blistering desert sands, muddy puddles, cow dung, and even up the final incline to the Temple of Vaishno Devi. Ludkan (or Lotan) Baba rolled as fast as the small group of devotees could walk behind him, often going for an entire day and disregarding his many sores. This particular pilgrimage across India earned him a place in *The Guinness Book of World Records,* but this strange form of locomotion is for him a sacred practice that is dedicated to world peace.

When it comes to vows like the "great vow" (*mahāvrata*) of Patanjali, there is virtually no flexibility: Once the *yogin* has taken it after due consideration, he simply must keep it, regardless of any difficult personal consequences. A vow is taken before that Reality, or Being, which or who we consider supreme. "As God/Goddess is my witness. . ." Thus, we voluntarily enter into a serious obligation, of which only the higher Being can absolve us.

We have lost the art of vowing (witness the myriad broken marriages), and we are not even very good anymore at keeping our modest promises. Pledges can be considered as occupying the space between solemn sacred vows and secular promises. A pledge is a sincere commitment, which we seek to honor to the best of our ability.

JAINA VOWS

In Jaina Yoga, which precedes Patanjali's Classical Yoga, the five disciplines of the "great vow" are collectively known as *anu-vrata*. This tradition also knows many other vows, and the householder *yogin's* body is compared to a warehouse whose most precious contents are the sacred vows, which must be preserved under all circumstances. Thus, it is always possible (and karmically even likely) to obtain another body, but virtue (*dharma*)—the quintessence of all vows—is difficult to accumulate and hence stands in need of careful protection.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Brown, Lester R. *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble.* New York: W. W. Nortion, 2003.

Callahan, David. *The Cheating Culture: Why More Americans Are Doing Wrong to Get Ahead.* New York: Harcourt, 2004.

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Elgin, Duane. *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward A Way Of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich.* New York: Quill/William Morrow, rev. ed. 1993.

Feuerstein, Georg. *Yoga Morality: Ancient Teachings at a Time of Global Crisis.* (To be published by Hohm Press)

Gandhi, M. K. *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth.* Foreword by Sissela Bok. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, repr. 1993.

Hartranft, Chip. *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali: A New Translation with Commentary.* Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 2003.

Kaza, Stephanie, ed. *Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume.* Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 2005.

Pierce, Linda Breen. *Choosing Simplicity: Real People Finding Peace and Fulfillment in a Complex World.* Carmel, Calif.: Gallagher Press, 1999.

Suzuki, David. *Time To Change: Essays.* Toronto: Stoddart, 1994.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

"Money is powerful. We can use our money power. We can direct our dollars where they will work for a just and sustainable economy. As millions of us take responsibility for the impact of who and what our dollars support, we are the seeds of the next great social movement. Together, with committed minds and hearts, we can build the world we want."

—Joel Solomon, Foreword to Deb Abbey, ed., *Global Profit and Global Justice,* p. x

Suggested Yoga Practice
RESPONSIBLE LIVING

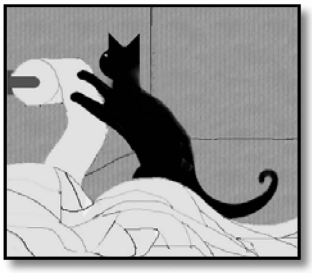
Presumably, as someone practicing or at least being interested in Yoga, you will have examined your life at some point in time to determine how you can simplify it and harmonize it more with your spiritual aspirations. If you have not done so, or have not done so in a long while, you might find the following questions helpful. Take your time to really go through this exercise and engage it over several days (perhaps pondering one single question each time).

1. Are all my activities necessary to sustain me physically, mentally, and emotionally, or are there some activities that I engage in merely out of habit and to little or no benefit to myself or other people? Would I suffering some deficit if I were to drop them?

2. Am I a responsible consumer? Do I know how the products I consume are produced and distributed? For instance, do I know which, if any, of them are made by socially and environmentally irreponsible companies? Does their production involve sweatshops, underpaid labor, child labor, environmentally unfriendly processes or materials, and so forth? Are the products I consume locally and organically grown, or do they keep the chemical industry going and have to be transported long distances at great expense to the environment? Do any of the products harm animals and contribute to the Sixth Mass Extinction?

3. Am I properly informed about the financial institutions with which I do business? Am I sure, for example, that they do not also capitalize environmentally destructive corporations? (Banks loan money to organizations and corporations whose business is detrimental to the environment. Thus, Barclays Bank, among others, is directly responsible for the destruction of Brazilian rainforests. Greenpeace is one of the sources of information on environment-hostile banks and other organizations.)

4. Do my daily habits in any way harm other beings? For instance, could I use my private car less frequently in order to help reduce the emission of toxic gases that inevitably will harm my fellow humans and other creatures?



5. Are my consumption patterns wasteful of Nature's resources? Could I do with less and thereby ease the burden on the environment? Does my overconsumption (if any) steal from others?

6. Am I wasteful in my usage of paper? Do I use only recycled paper? Do I simply discard unwanted paper or re-use it? (Many brands of kitchen towels

and toilet paper are not recycled! By refusing to support companies that produce such environmentally hostile paper, you can contribute to a positive change in the marketplace.)

7. Do I really need a television set and, if so, do I really need to watch so many programs? How many hours a week is the set running without me watching anything or only with one eye? Am I watching while having a meal, which would be a form of stressful multitasking?

8. In what areas of my life, if any, do I fail to practice truthfulness? Do I "stretch" the truth when preparing my tax returns or applying for a job? In an animated conversation, do I tend to "tell tall tales" or embellish the truth? Do I believe that truth is never black or white but gray and fuzzy? Could I in any way improve on truthfulness in my life? Do I accept that there is wideslpread lying among politicians, or should I actively oppose this trend at least by voting for candidates that seem to have some integrity? Do I punctuate my speech with phrases like "truthfully" or "to tell you the truth" and, if so, why? Do I feel there is a place for lying in daily life (such as to protect someone and, if so, what are my *real* reasons for feeling this way?

9. How am I doing in regard to the virtue of chastity? Do I consider this whole aspect of life unimportant or dismiss it as mere religious dogmatism? Why, if so, am I interested in the affairs of the rich and famous or those of friends, coworkers, and neighbors? How much time do I spend talking or thinking about sexual matters?

10. Do others think of me as a pack rat? (It's best to ask!) Do I find it difficult to let go of unneeded things either by discarding them or giving them away? Whenever I move, do I always seem to have more stuff than I had thought? Do I like to go window shopping and, if so, why?

11. Am I eager to keep my promises? Or do I tend to use the words "I promise" too casually? How do I feel when I have been unable to keep a promise? What do I feel about people who are lax in keeping promises? What have been my major failures in promise keeping? How did I make up for them?

12. Do I consider moral values old fashioned? Do I place practical expediency above virtue? Do I think that virtues are rather impractical ideals, which can never be realized in real life? If I think that the cultivation of virtues is important, do I tend to be a perfectionist and does my perfectionism get in the way of harmonious interpersonal relationships? How can I pursue moral ideals without turning them into abstract and unrealizeable idols?

Don't rush through the course!
Studying is a yogic practice.

For Reflection

1. Plato thought that for the benefit of one's community, it would be permissible to indulge in a "noble lie"? Do you feel that this great philosopher was right, or do you consider lying for any reason reprehensible?

2. Do you believe we are living in a promising New Age or in what the Hindus and Buddhists call *kali-yuga*—an era of physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, and social decline? If neither, do you regard either notion as having any merit?

3. Do you believe that terrorism is possible for any ego-bound individual? Or do you regard it as a special phenomenon of religious fanatics only?

4. Do you think that the traditional Hindu concepts of *sva-bhāva* and *sva-dharma* have any relevance in our contemporary society? (See Essay #39 on "Yoga and Terrorism" in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*)

5. The Dalai Lama has been criticized by some of his own people for pursuing a radically pacifist policy relative to China's invasion of his homeland. Even Gandhi thought that there are occasions on which one ought to fight for one's principles. Bearing in mind that the Dalai Lama is not only the temporal leader of the Tibetan diaspora but also a monk, do you consider his stance viable and reasonable?

6. What do you think of the traditional Indian concept of merit (*punya*), a notion that lends itself readily to quanitification, as if virtue could be measured in terms of "brownie points"?

7. In order to advance the spiritual process in their disciples, some traditional *gurus* discard conventional morality and teach in ways that seem to contradict the moral principles of Yoga. Do you consider this kind of "crazy wisdom" behavior justifiable or unjustifiable *in principle*? How do you feel about applying this teaching style in a contemporary setting?

8. Most people in our Western society feel under great pressure to labor very intensively in order to be able to pay their monthly bills, even when they do not indulge in luxuries. Many, perhaps, are not even able financially to simplify their lives in a significant manner, and thus are caught in a never-ending struggle for survival. Some Western nations, notably the United States, are producing poverty-stricken individuals and families in ever-increasing numbers. How could a yogic perspective help to alleviate this unfortunate situation? Since governments seem incapable of remedying the plight experienced by so many, what can and should one do to bring about positive change?

QUESTIONNAIRE 7

(Please **submit** your answers to tyslearning@sasktel.net)

1. Mahatma Gandhi believed that human beings . . . *(Check one)*

(a) can completely free themselves from the vice of *himsā*
(b) should strive to completely overcome *himsā*
(c) can never totally overcome harmful action

2. What is meant by *pratyaksha*? *(Check one)*

(a) countermeasure
(b) opposite
(c) perception
(d) idea

3. To which major virtue does sincerity belong? *(Check one)*

(a) *astyea*
(b) *satya*
(c) *ahimsā*
(d) *aparigraha*

4. What is meant by *lobha*? *(Check one)*

(a) ignorance
(b) lust
(c) anger
(d) pride
(e) greed

5. What is the Sanskrit term for "thirsting" for things? *(Check one)*

(a) *kāma*
(b) *lobha*
(c) *parigraha*
(d) *trishna*
(e) *rāga*
(f) *abhinivesha*

6. What is meant by *maithunā*? *(Check one)*

(a) ecstasy
(b) bliss
(c) Tantric ritual
(d) ritual sex

7. In which branch of Yoga does the *kundalinī-shakti* play a central role? *(Check one or more)*

(a) Karma-Yoga
(b) Rāja-Yoga
(c) Hatha-Yoga
(d) Tantra-Yoga
(e) Forceful Yoga
(f) Jnāna-Yoga
(g) Bhakti-Yoga

8. With which vices is overconsumption associated? *(Check one or more and justify your choice)*

(a) *steya*
(b) *lobha*
(c) *avidyā*
(d) *trishna*
(e) *moha*

9. Do you agree with Kierkegaard that truth always lies with the minority? *(Write three or more sentences)*

10. Do you consider sexual abstinence of vital importance on the spiritual path or do you see it as an option? *(Explain your reasons in 5 or more sentences)*

11. Does humanity "own" planet Earth, does it have stewardship over it, or should it be far more modest in its assumptions? *(Write 5 or more sentences)*

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

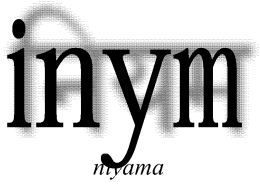
Lesson 8
Turning Up the Heat

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand Patanjali's five practices of self-restraint and apply them to daily life*

- The Five Practices of Self-Restraint
- Purity
- The Dual Mind
- Bodily Perfection
- Contentment
- Austerity
- The Long-Haired Ascetic (Keshin)
- The Broom of Spiritual Discipline
- The Austerity of Silence
- Noise Pollution
- Right Seeing, Hearing and Speaking
- More on Studying
- Wisdom and the Hierarchy of Needs
- Devotion to the Lord
- How to Practice Ishvara-Pranidhāna in a Modern Context
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Cutting Through
- "For Reflection"
- Advice from Marcus Aurelius
- Questionnaire 8

THE FIVE PRACTICES OF SELF-RESTRAINT



niyama

While the five great moral disciplines (*yama*) are absolutely obligatory for the Yoga practitioner, the five practices of self-restraint (*niyama*) are optional, but anyone wishing to make progress on the spiritual path will have to adopt some or all of them. Thus, a *yogin* or *yoginī* lacking in purity, contentment, or a measure of self-discipline is unlikely to advance beyond the first few steps.

2.32: SHAUCA-SAMTOSHA-TAPAH-SVĀDHYĀYA-ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNĀNI NIYAMĀH

"Purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and devotion to the Lord are the [five] restraints."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.32 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have opted to translate niyama here with "restraint" or "self-restraint" rather than, as in my book, with "observance."

2.40: SHAUCĀT SVA-ANGA-JUGUPSĀ PARAIR ASAMSARGAH

"Through purity [the *yogin* gains] distance from his own limbs [as well as the desire for] noncontamination by others."

2.41: SATTVA-SHUDDHI-SAUMANASYA-EKA-AGRYA-INDRIYA-JAYA-ĀTMA-DARSHANA-YOGYATVĀNI CA

"Furthermore* (*ca*), purity of *sattva,* gladness, one-pointedness, mastery of the senses, and the capacity for self-vision [are achieved]."

2.42: SAMTOSHĀD ANUTTAMAH SUKHA-LĀBHAH

"Through contentment unexcelled joy is gained."

Continued on next page

*Please note that, contrary to the translation in my book, the word "and" (*ca*), here rendered as "furthermore," is part of the Sanskrit text and hence should not have been placed in brackets.

2.43: KĀYA-INDRIYA-SIDDHIR ASHUDDHI-KSHAYĀT TAPASAH

"Through austerity, on account of the dwindling of impurity, perfection of the body and the senses [is gained]."

2.44: SVĀDHYĀYĀD ISHTA-DEVATĀ-SAMPRAYOGAH

"Through self-study [the *yogin* comes into] contact with the chosen deity."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.40–44 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
  NOTE: In 2.43, *siddhih* becomes *siddhir* because of the following *a* sound.
- Next read Chapter 14 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

PURITY

shauca

From a yogic perspective, we exist in a state of defilement, because we are not present as Spirit, that is, we are unenlightened and thus wrongly identify with aspects of the cosmos (i.e., our body-mind), which, by comparison with Spirit, represents darkness.

I mentioned briefly before how the whole yogic path can be viewed as a process of progressive purification, or *sattvification.* Even though the word *shauca* is often used to denote physical purity, Patanjali undoubtedly had inner purity in mind when composing aphorism 2.40. But masters of other yogic schools, especially those belonging to the branch of Hatha-Yoga, also invented and elaborated physical cleansing methods and techniques.

- Now read Essay #33 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

PURE MIND

When left to itself, untouched by the clouding effect of various kinds of cognitions, the mind is like a highly polished mirror, or a pure crystal. Like a beautiful lotus, it rests unstained above the muddy waters of the world.

BODILY PERFECTION

In aphorism 2.43, Patanjali mentions the "perfection of body and organs" (*kāya-indriya-siddhi*), which, given his overall focus on advanced meditation practice, may seem surprising. Needless to say, yogic bodily perfection has nothing to do with the kind of physical "perfection" sought by the rich and famous, who regularly resort to plastic surgery to maintain the illusion of eternal youth. Yet, like all ancient Yoga masters, Patanjali was well aware of those representatives of Yoga who do not seek perfection (*siddhi*) merely at the transcendental level of existence but who want to realize it here and now on the material plane. Yoga has always consisted of these two camps: those aspiring to liberation (*moksha*) in the most radical manner, that is, freedom that coincides with the demise of the physical body, and those aspiring to embodied liberation (*jīvan-mukti*), that is, to physical immortality (*amrita*). The latter are also referred to as the great adepts (*mahā-siddha*), who have fully realized the transcendental Self (*parama-ātman*) yet are not dissolved into that Ultimate Being but instead roam, totally free, in the subtle realms in order to help others.

Perhaps aphorism 2.43 is a hidden reference to the second kind of spiritual attainment, which is known in Tibetan Buddhist Yoga as the attainment of the Rainbow Body. It is curious, though, that when we carefully analyze Patanjali's own view of liberation, we must conclude that he subscribed to the ideal of *videha-mukti,* or disembodied liberation. I will address this in Lesson 16.

In case you were wondering, Patanjali defines what he means by bodily perfection in chapter 3 of his work in conjunction with his discussion of paranormal powers. Clearly, the kind of body he has in mind is that of a realized master, or *siddha,* who, by virtue of his spiritual realization has total control over the elements and thus is endowed with an extraordinary body that defies all the known laws of Nature. In Tantra-Yoga, this body is known as the "adamantine body" (*vajra-deha*) or "divine body" (*divya-deha*)—the kind of body that the semi-legendary Babaji of Kriya-Yoga fame is said to have. He was first introduced to the West by the famous Paramahansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi* and other works.

3.46: RŪPA-LĀVANYA-BALA-VAJRA-SAMHANANATVĀNI KĀYA-SAMPAT

"Beauty, gracefulness and adamantine robustness [constitute] the perfection of the body."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.46 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: The word *rūpa* means literally "form" but often also stands for "beauty." *Lāvanya,* strangely, also means "saltiness," but in some contexts conveys "loveliness," "gracefulness," or "charm." Here and in aphorism 3.45 instead of *kāya-siddhi* Patanjali uses the synonym *kāya-sampad.*

CONTENTMENT

samtosha

We tend to think of contentment as a reward for right living rather than as a distinct spiritual practice, and possibly that is why so few people have come to enjoy this wonderful virtue. As long as we are waiting to become content, as if it were a reward or miraculous gift, we will indeed be waiting for a long time. The fact that Patanjali counted *samtosha* among the five self-restraints tells us that we are expected to be actively engaged in realizing it. As Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the author of *The Contented Man* (1912), noted: "True contentment is a thing as active as agriculture. It is the power of getting out of any situation all that there is in it. It is arduous and it is rare."

One way of understanding contentment is to regard it as the practice of ungrudgingly accepting things and circumstances as they are. This statement, however, needs to be qualified as follows: In the *verticalist* tradition of Yoga, which champions radical asceticism and world renunciation, contentment implies that the *yogin* must have absolutely no expectations of life. Thus, while bearing no ill will toward anyone, he also does not go out of his way to benefit others but rests content within himself. He is unconcerned about whether the cosmos continues or ceases to exist, whether the world is evil or free from malice. He simply cultivates extreme dispassion.

The practitioner of the *integral* stream of Yoga, by contrast, is not so utterly indifferent, because he or she *actively* cares about the welfare of other beings and thus may be directly involved in issues like social justice, feeding the poor, or improving the environment. Yet, the *integral*-type of Yoga practitioner also does not become attached to outcomes, but simply continues to engage in lawful actions for the betterment of all human and nonhuman beings. Thus, although he or she may not accept the *status quo* of a given situation, a basic attitude of nonattachment nevertheless makes for a disposition of contentment. This attitude is fundamental to Karma-Yoga and indeed all other forms and branches of Yoga. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* the God-man Krishna teaches:

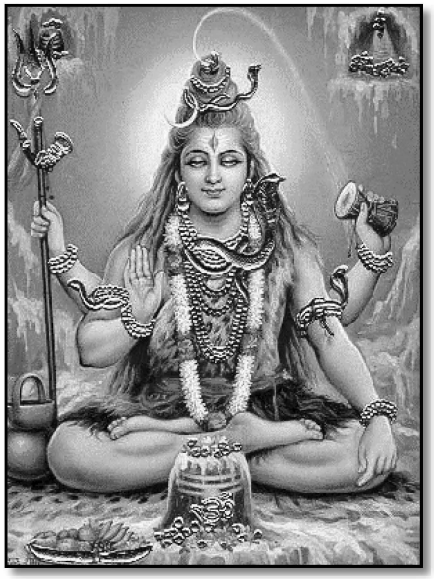
> But for the person who has Self-delight and Self-satisfaction (*ātma-tripta*) and is content (*samtushta*) with the Self alone, nothing remains to be done. (3.17)

This sounds like a classic instance of verticalist Yoga. But then Krishna qualifies his advice to his disciple Prince Arjuna as follows:

> Therefore, unattached, always perform the work that is to be done, for a person attains the Highest by doing work unattached. (3.19)
>
> Verily, [King] Janaka and others reached perfection by doing work. You, too, should be prepared to work with a view of benefiting the world (*loka-samgraha*). (3.20)

AUSTERITY

Before the term *yoga* came to be widely applied to the spiritual path in the post-Vedic era, the Indian sages spoke of *tapas* or "heat," meaning "asceticism, "penance," or "austerity." Already at the time of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (c. 500 B.C.), *tapas* denoted a certain kind of rigorous spiritual practice that often was extreme and therefore onesided and disharmonious. Often *tapas* was employed to coerce the deities (*devatā*) into granting the practitioner (called *tapasvin*) a boon other than ultimate spiritual realization. The *Gītā* was the first scripture, which is still extant today, to make a clear distinction between extreme *tapas* and balanced *yoga*. Krishna, the God-man who is remembered as giving the teachings found in the *Gītā,* explicitly (in verse 7.5) condemned exaggerated asceticism, which springs from ostentation, selfishness and which ignores the fact that the Divine resides in the human body.



Shiva is the archetypal yogin *or* tapasvin, *who is capable of extraordinary asceticism*

In another passage of this work (17.14–19.), Krishna speaks of three types of asceticism:

> Worship of the Gods, the twice-born ones, the teachers, and the wise, as well as purity, uprightness, chastity, and non-harming—[these are] called asceticism of the body.
>
> Speech that causes no disquiet and is truthful, pleasant, and beneficial, as well as the practice of study (*svādhyāya*)—[these are] called asceticism of speech.
>
> Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint, and purification of the [inner] states—these are called mental asceticism.
>
> This threefold asceticism practiced with supreme faith by men [who are] yoked and not longing for the fruit [of their deeds] is designated as *sattva*-natured.
>
> Asceticism that is performed for the sake of [gaining] good treatment, honor and reverence [from others], or with ostentation—that is called here [in this world] *rajas*-natured. It is fickle and unsteady.
>
> Asceticism that is performed out of foolish conceptions [with the aim] of torturing oneself or that has the purpose of ruining another—that is called *tamas*-natured.

tps

tapas

Now read Essay #32 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

THE LONG-HAIRED ASCETIC (KESHIN)

Shaiva sadhu with extremely long hair

The following verses constitute the "Hymn of the Long-Hair" (*keshī-sūkta*) of the *Rig-Veda* (10.136), which gives us a glimpse of the wildness of some *yogins*—a feature of the Yoga tradition in India even today.

The *keshin*, as the name indicates, wears his hair long, as is the custom with many *sādhus* nowadays. He is as compassionate as he is mindlessly God-intoxicated or "God-impelled" (*deva-ishita*, written *deveshita*).

The phrase "wind-girt" in stanza 2 has generally been interpreted to mean "nude." But this could also have deeper symbolic significance. As is clear from other verses of this hymn, the *keshin* is closely associated with Vāyu, God of the wind, or the life force. If we read this hymn from a yogic point of view, we could easily wrest from this phrase a different meaning: that the *keshin* armed himself with the breath, that is, he practiced breath control. This would explain the first-person exclamation "upon the winds we have ascended." In that case, it is through the regulation of the breath that the *keshin* enters a different state of consciousness (and its corresponding reality).

It is not clear what is meant by the "unbendable" (*kunamnamā*) in the concluding stanza (the only place in Vedic literature where this word appears). The British Indologist Jeanine Miller speculates that it may be the "gross aspect" of the human body-mind, that is, the material vehicle that resists psychospiritual transformation.

God Vāyu, the master of the life force (*prāna*), is said to have "churned" and "pounded" the "badly bent one" (*kunamnamā*) for the *keshin*. Perhaps we can even see in this an early reference to the dormant psychospiritual power of the human body, which later came to be known as the *kundalinī-shakti*.

> The long-haired one [endures] fire; the long-haired one [endures] poison; the long-haired one endures Heaven-and-Earth [both physical and psychic]; the long-haired one gazes fully on Heaven; the long-haired one is said to be that [transcendental] Light. (1)

The wind-girt sages (*muni*) have donned the tawny dirt. Along wind's course they glide when the Gods have penetrated [them]. (2)

"Exulted by our silence (*mauna*), upon the winds we have ascended. Behold, you mortals, our bodies [only]." (3)

Through the mid-region flies the sage illuminating all forms; for his goodness, he is deemed the friend of every God. (4)

Wind's steed, Vâyu's friend, is the God-intoxicated sage; within both oceans he dwells, the upper and the lower. (5)

In the paths of *apsarases* [female spirits], *gandharvas* [male spirits], and beasts wanders the long-haired one, knower of [the most hidden] thoughts, a gentle friend, most exhilarating. (6)

For him has Vâyu churned and pounded the badly bent one (*kunamnamâ*), when the long-haired one drank with Rudra from the poison cup. (7)

THE BROOM OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Just as a broom is used to clean an area, in the same way the broom of sadhan [spiritual discipline] is needed to clean away the dirt within. Just as a broom goes under a bed and pulls out dirt from places where your hand cannot reach, similarly, sadhan drags out and thins accumulated impressions [samskara] in the mind, which have been hiden there for ages . . . Willingly or unwillingly, an individual is always accumulating dirt in his mind. Here we remove dirt with the help of a broom, and then we leave the broom in a corner. After taking a bath, when we are caught up in the misconception of purity, we detest the idea of even touching a broom. But the egoless broom is always ready, and is available every day to help us clean away the dirt we have accumulated.

—Swami Vishnu Tirth
Cited in Swami Shivom Tirth, *Churning of the Heart,* vol. 3: *Union With the Infinite* (Pond Eddy: Swami Shovom tirth Ashram, 2004), p. 99.

THE AUSTERITY OF SILENCE

muni

mauna

A common Sanskrit designation for "sage" is *muni*. Literally, a *muni* is someone who practices the art of voluntary silence (*mauna*). Given our noisy civilization, which bombards us with all sorts of sounds, the deliberate cultivation of silence seems especially important. As Yoga practitioners, we would do well to now and then escape our cacophanous cities to spend quiet time in the countryside amidst trees, flowers, and grass. The sounds of Nature are healing, whereas the disharmonious noise of populous settlements contributes to stress and illness.

Now read Essay #36 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*.

NOISE POLLUTION

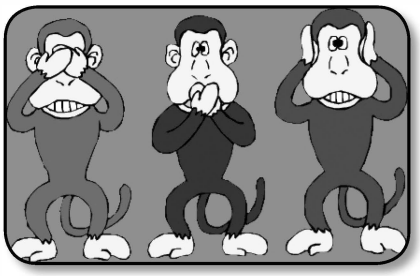
We have become familiar with the concept of pollution, but seldom do we recognize the deleterious effects of the noise around us. Our contemporary soundscape is a veritable sonar hell realm, with noise (= undesirable, disturbing sound) emitted by cars, radios, televisions, machines, appliances, airplanes, and people themselves.

Normal breathing rates at 10 decibels, a normal conversation at 60 decibels, a Diesel truck 30 feet away at 100 decibels, and a jet plane at a distance of 100 feet at 130 decibels. Some home stereo equipment can exceed 140 decibels and burst ear drums!

Prolonged exposure to loud noise is known to destroy our hearing, but it also negatively affects our nervous system. We humans are born with a capacity to perceive sound vibrations in the range of 16–30,000 cycles (or hertz), which by the age of twelve has dropped to c. 20,000 hertz. The biggest damage to our ears and brain is done by noise in the range of 20–40,000 hertz. Cats can hear sounds up to 64,000 hertz and porpoises up to 150,000 hertz.

For hearing-impaired persons, who may hear only in the range of 500 hertz, the sound has to be proportionately higher (c. 80 decibels), which is a strain on others in the immediate vicinity. The moral discipline of nonharming (*ahimsā*) requires us to take care of our hearing. Mental health and also social health calls for us to practice the cultivation of silence!

RIGHT SEEING, HEARING, AND SPEAKING



Tapas is challenging at the best of times. We may hear stories about the spectacular feats of India's ascetics, like those of Ludkan Baba mentioned in Lesson 7, and be very impressed by them. Perhaps we even start to think that we are quite unable to practice *tapas* ourselves. If so, we ought to think again! For *tapas* to be true austerity, it does not have to be spectacular but merely have a "sting" to it. That is to say, *tapas* can be any discipline that we voluntarily adopt in order to demand more of ourselves than we are normally willing to engage. Even our busy householder lives afford us numerous opportunities to practice genuine *tapas.*

We don't have to stand on one leg for hours, days, and weeks on end, or even while traveling on a subway or waiting for a bus or standing in front of a store counter, though I have seen some eccentric Yoga posture enthusiasts do just that. Nor do we have to roll in the dirt or stop taking solid food. Most likely, we would be asked to visit our local clinic for psychiatric evaluation. *Tapas* can be quite unspectacular and even inconspicuous and yet challenge us considerably.

For instance, a wonderful discipline for householder *yogins* and *yoginīs* is to practice control over what they choose to see, hear, and speak. Most people would probably agree that our contemporary world bombards us with unsavory, ugly images in newspapers, magazines and movies, and on television, billboards, and T-shirts. Although we may have absolutely no interest in the message these images are meant to convey, we often allow our eyes to wander over them anyway and then may even be affected emotionally in a negative way. Similarly, we do not always exercise appropriate discrimination in regard to the sounds we hear, especially unedifying and even foul language. We also are not always prudent about what we say to others, and our words may cause them to feel hurt, shocked, or angry.

A good practice of *tapas* would be to at least attempt for one day to NOT let our eyes wander in the jungle of imagery around us, or to NOT permit our ears to make out the banal lyrics of pop songs or track down other people's private conversation, or to NOT speak casually and without first reflecting on what we are about to say.

Scrutinize what you hear. Be aware of what you are looking at. Pause before you speak. You'll have a better day.

MORE ON STUDYING

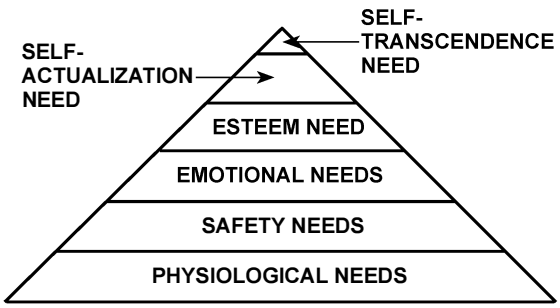
Like austerity (*tapas)* and devotion to the Lord (*īshvara-pranidhāna*), self-study (discussed in Lesson 1) is not only listed among the five self-restraints but also is a principal component of the path of Kriyā-Yoga. Thus, it is clearly a crucial aspect of the yogic *opus*, and we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the anti-intellectualism of some representatives of Yoga. Study is particularly vital for Western students, who generally do not have access to the rich oral tradition of Yoga and whose cultural background is vastly different from that of India. Without proper study of the yogic heritage, we are prone to misinterpret the little we know of it. This, of course, does not mean that we should indulge in a mind trip which bypasses actual practice.

WISDOM AND THE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

The Yoga practitioner studies in order to gain wisdom, for only wisdom becomes an integral part of who he or she is. In the form of our essential character (*sva-bhāva*), or mental continuum, wisdom travels with us from life to life. In the present lifetime, wisdom shapes our understanding, attitude, and actions in a variety of ways. Among other things it helps us:

- to see things clearly (without too many distorting projections)
- to act with prudence, efficiency, foresight, and caring
- to face life realistically and with equanimity
- to determine when to act and when to wait
- to grow spiritually and move into greater freedom

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow, we have all sorts of needs that allow us to grow harmoniously and to our full potential. They can be arranged in the following pyramid:



The need for self-actualization ("to be able to do what one is born to do") announces itself when the other, more basic needs are taken care of. The need to transcend the human condition as such, through ecstasy and wisdom, is the highest of all needs.

DEVOTION TO THE LORD

ishta-devatā

We talked about devotion to the Lord in Lesson 3 in conjunction with Kriyā-Yoga, and so I will limit myself to just a few additional observations here. The practice of most traditional Yoga adepts has a devotional side to it. With few exceptions, *yogins* and *yoginīs* worship a particular deity, such as Shiva, Krishna, Ganesha, Kālī, or Rādhā (see image). Some identify their chosen deity (*ishta-devatā*) with the Ultimate Reality, others regard him or her more like a guardian angel, a helper on the path to liberation. They all, however, believe that deities are real and not merely figments of the imagination. They belong to the subtle (*sūkshma*) realm of existence, which is accessible to adepts who can "travel" there in their mind. One of Patanjali's aphorisms warns against becoming trapped in any heavenly region, which falls short of the supreme ideal of liberation.

3.51: STHĀNY-UPANIMANTRANE SANGA-SMAYA-AKARANAM PUNAR ANISHTA-PRASANGĀT

"Upon invitation of high-placed [beings], [the *yogin* should give himself] no cause for attachment or pride, because of [the risk of] renewed and undesired fondness [for lower levels of existence instead of liberation]."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.51 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: For the sake of clarity, I have simplified the translation of this aphorism. *Prasanga* can mean "attachment," "inclination," and "fondness." *Smaya* ("pride") also means "smiling, grinning." Grammatically, *sthāni* becomes *sthāni* owing to the following *u* sound. Also, *punah* ("again," here: "renewed") must be changed to *punar* because of the following *a* sound.

In his *Yoga-Bhāshya,* Vyāsa comments on aphorism 3.51 as follows:

The celestial beings residing in high regions noticing the purity of the intellect of those who have attained unalloyed truth . . . try to invite them by tempting them with enjoyments available in their regions in the following manner: "O Great Soul, come and sit here and enjoy yourself. It is lovely here. Here is a lovely lady. This elixir prevents death and decay. Here is a vehicle which can take you to the skies. The tree which fulfils all wishes is here . . . here are the perfected Siddhas and the great seers. Beautiful and obedient nymps, super-normal eyes and ears, a body of adamantine strength, all are here."

—Translation by Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali, with the Commentary of Vyāsa* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1981), pp. 333–334.

In his *Textbook of Yoga Psychology* (p. 288), Rammurti S. Mishra offers the following alternative interpretation of aphorism 3.51:

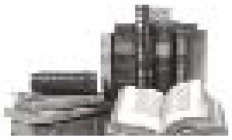
"There must be no exhibition of performance of prejudice, idiosyncrasy, and slighting of others by any means such as anger, conceit, sarcasm, scorn, etc., in the assembly of learned and good-natured men on their invitation because these may bring again loss of his position in the world of relativity.

"Open heart and open mind are signs of sincerity. For an intelligent man, everyone is a teacher. For an ignorant man, everyone is wrong. An intelligent man can learn something even from a newborn infant but an ignorant man may not learn even from an intelligent man's instructions."

HOW TO PRACTICE ĪSHVARA-PRANIDHĀNA IN A MODERN CONTEXT

The contemporary Western student of Yoga, who generally has not converted to Hinduism, will be wondering how to practice *īshvara-pranidhāna.* Deities like Shiva, Krishna, Sundaradevī or Kālī may be highly meaningful to Hindus, but they are unlikely to inspire the average Western student with devotion. What deity, if any, should a non-Hindu practitioner choose? The answer is simple if he or she is a Christian or Jew and still practicing his or her religion. The secularized Westerner, however, generally has no relationship to any images of God or Goddess and may even react strongly (and sometimes rather emotionally) to traditional theological concepts and imagery. In this case, first of all, there is obviously room for self-inspection to discover why one has such a strong reaction and whether, perhaps, some unconscious bias or deliberate ideology is at work. Once one has fully understood one's reactivity, the obvious next step is to practice tolerance. A person with this orientation can still practice a modified version of *īshvara-pranidhāna* by recognizing that Reality is much larger than his or her own body-mind and life and then open to the unknown *depth* of Reality.

But what about a Yoga practitioner who simply is not moved by any traditional religion and yet has a sense of the existence of Spirit (however vaguely conceived)? There is no need to create a colorful image of an *ishta-devatā,* though a concrete focal point for mental concentration is generally thought to be better than an abstraction. It is always possible to practice simple *openness to the presence of Spirit* both within and around us. Since Spirit is our true nature, we are never out of "communication" with it. We merely have to learn to listen better. Then, as Spirit becomes a more tangible presence for us, we may even experience reverence and awe.



FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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Suggested Yoga Practice
CUTTING THROUGH

Once we have learned that *tapas* are not tasty appetizers served before Spanish meals but that this Sanskrit word stands for a demanding spiritual practice involving great self-transcending effort, we must ask ourselves how seriously we wish to engage the self-transforming process. Here are some guidelines for your consideration. To go into sufficient depth and gain sustained results, please engage this "cutting through" exercise over several sessions.

1. Sit quietly and take a few deep breaths to calm your mind. Resolve to make this self-examination count. For practical purposes, consider it to be a type of meditation.

2. How clear are you about your spiritual goals? And what exactly are you willing to risk in order to realize them? Some of the great adepts have spoken of being prepared to sacrifice their bodily existence in order to realize liberation. In an earlier Lesson, you were asked to inquire into your personal limitations and liabilities, which should have given you a concrete idea of what is holding you back on the spiritual path. Now you are invited to examine just what your vision and personal circumstances allow you to do in terms of practicing *tapas.* Everyone can do something more than he or she is doing currently. It is natural for the mind to feel resistance when challenged to change. What, in practical terms, are you willing to do to overcome this resistance? How precisely will you up the ante? Consider an aspect of your life—however seemingly insignificant it may seem from the larger perspective of liberation—that you can point to as being unconscious or semiconscious and perhaps detrimental to your psychomental or spiritual welfare. Consider further how you could practice *tapas* in regard to that aspect, or undesirable behavior pattern. For instance, you might discover that on coming home from work you immediately go to the refrigerator to help yourself to some comfort food or that you absent-mindedly turn on the television, even though you know you will watch it only with one eye while doing other chores. Or you might find that you equally absent-mindedly leave through a newspaper or magazine or engage in some other activity without paying proper attention to it. Or, inspecting your eating habits, you might recognize that you overfill your plate and then have to discard the remaining food, or that you tend to eat until you feel "stuffed." Or you might come to acknowledge that you often wake up or go to work in a foul mood, which helps neither you nor those around you. Or you might find that you always want to have the last word, be the center of attention, or tend to focus on the negative.

3. Write down whatever behavior patterns you can isolate as unproductive and mechanical and then select

ONE that you feel you can change. Sincerely desire to make this change and promise to yourself that you will for a limited and manageable period of time (one or more days) make every effort to behave differently in your chosen area.

4. If after the stipulated period, your behavior pattern has not changed according to your initial vision, then either reaffirm your resolution to conquer this particular habit, adjust the criteria so that you have a better chance of succeeding, or switch to a new, less challenging option. There is no point in frustrating yourself to a degree where you will give up making any effort at all. Likewise, there is no point in feeling guilty for not accomplishing your set goal.

5. Remember that from a higher perspective the path *is* the goal, providing we tread it correctly! Every effort made in the direction of self-transcending conduct is a winning ticket. Don't measure yourself against the apparent progress made by others, because their path is unique to them. The important thing is to develop an attitude of "cutting through," of not letting the unconscious get the better of you but to slowly and steadily chip away at its reign.

Millions of people are working hard seeking something without knowing what it is. And that is why they reach nowhere. It is after knowing who you are that you will understand what you want to become. This knowledge will infuse your mind and heart with clarity: it will drive away all doubts and fears. It will make you self-confident. It will help you set priorities in life; then you will know exactly where and how God-realization fits into your life. . .

The actual meaning of *tapas . . .* is adopting a lifestyle where you begin to shine in your thoughts, speech, and actions. Adopt a lifestyle where you become a light to yourself and a light to others.

—Swami Rama, *Happiness Is Your Creation* (Honesdale, Penn.: Himalayan Institute Press, 2005), p. 93 and p. 21

***Tapas* is not penance. You do not need to chastize yourself, because you are not the guilty party! Whatever austerities you may adopt, do so with a joyous heart and in the certainty of your ultimate triumph of liberation. Consider *tapas* an opportunity to realize your true nature rather than as some form of punishment. The best repentance for past misdeeds is a change of heart followed by appropriate conduct.**

For Reflection

1. Do you think that cleanliness is next to godliness? In other words, do you think that purity is an integral aspect of the spiritual process and, if so, in what way? Or do you see the religiospiritual concern with purity as an actual or potential neurosis? Can a person seriously committed to spiritual practice be expected to necessarily also maintain great bodily cleanliness? How do you regard the numerous *sādhus,* or holy men, of India who are deliberately ungroomed and often dirty? Is it possible to have a dirty body but clean mind?

2. Traditionally, practitioners of Yoga tend to minimize their social interaction and maximize their time alone. Do you regard this as a self-centered attitude or do you accept the classic explanation that this kind of isolationism supports the spiritual process? Does an active life in the world not test us more decisively, and are the Yoga adepts seeking out the isolation of caves and forests not merely avoiding life?

3. In his 1949 essay "Reflections on Gandhi," the British writer George Orwell (best known for his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) remarked: "The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals." Do you agree with this statement? Ponder in some depth how you would respond to Orwell if you were in conversation with him.

4. How much noise can you tolerate in your immediate environment? Do certain kinds of sounds affect your nervous system more than others? If so, why? Do you become disoriented in a noisy environment? Or do you tend to "shut down"? Or do you enjoy the noise associated with gregarious occasions? Are you able to "ride" on the waves of sound without losing focus? Are you comfortable with silence, especially in conversations? Or do you feel you have to "say something"?

5. How much gladness (*saumanasya*) do you experience in daily life? Are you by nature lighthearted or serious? Do you allow yourself to experience joy and delight, or do you distrust emotional highs and prefer to "steer on an even keel," even if sometimes this makes you feel needlessly sombre? Do you have fears or anxieties that prevent you from experiencing the joyful moments of life as fully as you could? If so, what have you done—or could you do—to address this issue?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

6. Are you a "creature of habit," a "stick in the mud," who does not like surprises or sudden change? Do you like your environment to be predictable? Or are you adventurous, thriving on variety and novelty? Do you see the merit of having a lifestyle that avoids both these extremes? Is your resistance to change based on fear of the new or on wanting everything to be comfortable? Are you an easy traveler, or do you have too many expectations that make traveling difficult for you?

7. Would you describe yourself as a contented individual? How do others see you? (Ask!) In what areas of life are you not (yet) contended? Do you believe that contentment depends on circumstances or on one's attitude? Is it possible to be contented in regard to some things but not others? Should one strive for contentment? Or would the very act of striving block out contentment? Who is the most contented person you know, and what thoughts pop into your head when you think of him or her?

8. Are you a reserved individual who values his or her privacy and who does not easily share himself or herself with others? Or do others know your lifestory in a first meeting? Do others think of you as a "nosy parker" or "meddler," or do you tend to mind your own business? (If you're not sure, ask! If you're sure, ask anyway! Sometimes others' perceptions don't match our own.) Are you inclined to stay out of others' business because of fear? Or do you believe in "live and let live," even when a person's behavior is disturbing to other people and perhaps should be addressed?

ADVICE FROM MARCUS AURELIUS (121–180 A.D.)

Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busy-body, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him who does wrong, that it is akin to me, not only of the same blood or seed, but that it participates in the same intelligence and the same portion of the divinity, I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him, For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.

—Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations* (Book 2, opening paragraph)
Translated by George Long

QUESTIONNAIRE 8

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. Which practice gives the *yogin* or *yoginī* contact with the adopted deity (*ishta-devatā*)? (*Check one*)

(a) *sattva-shuddhi*
(b) samādhi
(c) *samāpatti*
(d) *īshvara-pranidhāna*
(e) *svādhyāya*

2. Which Sanskrit scripture teaches that the mind is purified by truthfulness? *(Check one*)

(a) *Yoga-Bhāshya*
(b) *Mahābhārata*
(c) *Bhagavad-Gītā*
(d) *Manu-Smriti*
(e) *Maitrāyanīya-Upanishad*
(f) *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad*

3. Who interpreted *īshvara-pranidhāna* to mean the renunciation of the fruit of one's actions? *(Check one)*

(a) Patanjali
(b) Vyāsa
(c) King Bhoja
(d) Shankara
(e) Paramahansa Yogananda
(f) Swami Hariharananda

4. What is meant by *loka-samgraha*? *(Check one)*

(a) righteous action
(b) selfless action
(c) self-transcending action
(d) benevolent action

5. What is the Sanskrit term for "ascetic"? *(Check one)*

(a) *keshin*
(b) *yogin*
(c) *tapas*
(d) *tapasvin*

6. What is the difference between contentment and Self-satisfaction? *(Check one or more*)

(a) none
(b) contentment is more limited than Self-satisfaction
(c) contentment relates to things; Self-satisfaction to Spirit
(d) contentment is a temporal state, as opposed to Self-satisfaction

7. What is the Sanskrit term for "silence"? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *keshin*
(b) *muni*
(c) *vāg-gupti*
(d) *mauna*

8. What is meant by *sattva-shuddhi*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) mental purification
(b) physical purification
(c) purification of the guna responsible for transparency
(d) purification of one's inner being

9. What is the Sanskrit term for "purity"? *(Check one or more*)

(a) *shauca*
(b) *sattva*
(c) *sukha*
(d) *shuddhi*

10. What does the word *tapas* mean literally?
(Check one or more)

(a) penance
(b) heat
(c) fire
(d) glow
(e) torture

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 9
Sitting Still, Standing Tall

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To go deeper into the practice of posture and to appreciate proper "posture" in life as a whole*

- Posture and Posturing
- 8,400,000 postures
- Hatha-Yoga vs. Rāja-Yoga
- Favorite Meditation Postures
- Body-Mind Postures
- The Yogic View of the Body
- The Subtle Body
- Scientific Evidence for the Subtle Body
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Stretching Your Body-Mind
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 9

POSTURE AND POSTURING

Posture (*āsana*), the third limb of Patanjali's eight-limbed path, has received a great deal of attention from Western students of Yoga. It would not be far off the truth to describe contemporary Western Yoga as little more than posture practice, with much of the spiritual orientation and teachings of authentic Yoga stripped away. Often this approach is dubbed Hatha-Yoga, yet genuine Hatha-Yoga has always been promoted as a *spiritual* discipline with *liberation,* not fitness or health, for its ultimate goal. From a traditional perspective, then, Westernized Hatha-Yoga is a truncated form of Yoga, which usually starts and ends with posture practice as a purely physical exercise.

A contemporary Indian tapasvin *(ascetic) with his head buried in the ground and presumably hoping for alms from passers-by*

True health, however, is *wholeness*, which includes the precious body but also the higher levels of our being, which we can call "mind," providing we don't confuse mind with brain-dependent mental activity. For Yoga masters, mind is as vast as the universe itself, but then is filtered down to a mere trickle by our brain and nervous system with which we happen to identify so exclusively out of sheer spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*). Of course, posture practice could become an authentic yogic technique if it were done meditatively and with the goal of liberation in mind and back up by the moral disciplines (*yama*), as discussed in Lesson 7.

āsana

Āsana is by definition good posture. For Patanjali, this meant a good (easeful and stable) posture for meditation. But *āsana* also implies a good mental posture, or disposition. Thus, as one Yoga authority states: "The best posture is mental repose." Compare this with the "posturing" to which the ego-ensconced individual, including the narcissistic Yoga posture practitioner, is prone to fall prey. For instance, I witnessed on a number of occasions overly eager practitioners ignoring the teacher's instructions and instead doing their own, more advanced version of a posture, which was clearly to show off to the other students. But most people, not merely Yoga practitioners, are liable to egoic posturing, which is a form of pretense. In Yoga, which aims at transcending the ego, there is no room for such maneuvers.

☐ Now read Chapter 15 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

If one's posture is upright, one has no need to fear a crooked shadow.

—Chinese proverb

8,400,000 POSTURES

According to the scriptures of Hatha-Yoga, there are 8.4 million* postures, one for each type of being. We can tell from some of the names of *āsanas* that their investors were inspired by the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms: mountain posture (*parvata-āsana*); tree posture (*vriksha-āsana*), lotus posture (*padma-āsana*); cobra posture (*bhujanga-āsana*), lion posture (*simha-āsana*), tortoise posture (*kūrma-āsana*), fish posture (*matsya-āsana*), rooster posture (*kukkuta-āsana*), camel posture (*ushtra-āsana*), cow-face posture (*go-mukha-āsana*), and so forth. Many of these are unsuitable for meditation but are said to have a therapeutic benefit, serving either a preventative or curative purpose.

The twelfth-to-thirteenth-century *Goraksha-Paddhati* (1.9) states that of this multitude of natural "postures," only 84 are useful to Yoga practitioners. The *Gheranda-Samhitā* (2.2), a seventeenth-century text, limits the number of useful *āsanas* to 32. Some modern textbooks, however, list over 200. Most of these postures are beyond the reach of most nonacrobatic people, and for some of them one would even have to be double jointed and have loose connective tissue (an unenviable liability). It is highly doubtful that many of the so-called "advanced" *āsanas,* which were invented by Western practitioners rather than traditional Yoga masters, have a therapeutic value, though they do represent a challenge to one's flexibility and strength and therefore are most commonly featured in "Yoga" competitions, as they have become popular especially in Latin American countries.

The history of the evolution of meditation postures into therapeutic postures is not entirely clear. Even the *Siddha-Siddhānta-Paddhi,* an early work ascribed to the great master Goraksha, still only mentions postures for meditation. The emphasis on posture practice already during the medieval period caused the anonymous author of the *Garuda-Purāna* (227.44) to remark that the postures not only fail to promote Yoga but actually hinder one's spiritual progress. Naturally, the *āsanas* are ineffective as spiritual tools only if they are practiced for purely physical reasons.

*The figure of 840,000 given in some of my earlier publications is wrong. The error occurred because the Sanskrit texts speak of eighty-four hundred thousand (*caturashīti-lakshāni*) postures, which is slightly confusing.

■ Now read Essay #50 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

There are thoughts which are prayers. There are moments when, whatever the posture of the body, the soul is on its knees.

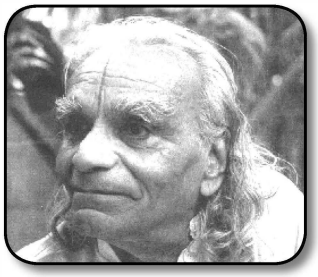
—Victor Hugo

HATHA-YOGA VS. RĀJA-YOGA

hatha-yoga

rāja-yoga

The Sanskrit word *hatha* means "force" or "forceful," while *rāja* means "ruler/king" or "royal." Both words convey very well the difference in approach between Hatha-Yoga and Patanjali's Rāja-Yoga. The former wants to take heaven by storm, while the latter proceeds with the dignity of royalty. When speaking of the awakening of the serpent power (*kundalinī-shakti*), which is the central task of Hatha-Yoga, the Hatha-Yoga texts often characterize this process as forceful, as if the Goddess Power could be hammered into compliance. Undoubtedly, many practices of this branch of Yoga involve great vigor and endurance. By contrast, Rāja-Yoga, as Patanjali's branch of Yoga came to be known, is essentially a quietistic path taking recourse to renunciation, meditation, and the kind of wisdom springing from the ecstatic (*samādhi*) state following deep meditation. The designation "Rāja-Yoga" can be found already in the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* where it is used more generically to denote Bhakti-Yoga, but in the fourteenth century came to be used in contradistinction to the ever more popular Hatha-Yoga.


B. K. S. Iyengar

Traditionally, both Hatha-Yoga and Rāja-Yoga are complete spiritual paths within themselves, leading the dedicated practitioner from karmic involvement in the world to true wisdom and, ultimately, liberation. Sri B. K. S. Iyengar, unquestionably the most influential master of Hatha-Yoga in modern times, regards both as complementary. This reflects the stance of Svātmārāma Yogendra, the author of the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpik*ā, a fourteenth-century Sanskrit manual, who introduced Hatha-Yoga as a ladder to Rāja-Yoga. Yet, traditionally, Hatha-Yoga had its own meditation techniques. Perhaps the idea that Hatha-Yoga is merely preparatory to the higher practices indirectly encouraged the development of a purely somatic Yoga in the West. Sri Iyengar's students and readers by and large have failed to appreciate his own spiritual orientation, which is clearly articulates already in his first book in English, *Light on Yoga,* where we find the following statement (pp. 42–43):

> Āsana brings steadiness, health and lightness of limb. A steady and pleasant posture produces mental equilibrium and prevents fickleness of mind . . . Many actors, acrobats, athletes, dancers, musicians and sportsmen also possess superb physiques and have great control over the body, but they lack control over the mind, the intellect and the Self. Hence they are in disharmony with themselves and one rarely comes across a balanced personality among them. They often put the body above all else. Though the yogi does not underrate his body, he does not think merely of its perfection but of his senses, mind, intellect and soul.
>
> The yogi conquers the body by the practice of āsanas and makes it a fit vehicle for

> the spirit. He know that it is a necessary vehicle for the spirit. A soul without a body is like a bird deprived of its power to fly . . . The yogi believes that his body has been given to him by the Lord not for enjoyment alone, but also for the service of his fellow men during every wakeful moment of his life. He does not consider it his property . . . The yogi realizes that his life and all its activities are part of the divine action in nature, manifesting and operating in the form of man. In the beating of his pulse and the rhythm of his respiration, he recognises the flow of the seasons and the throbbing of universal life. His body is a temple which houses the Divine Spark. He feels that to neglect or to deny the needs of the body and to think of it as something not divine, is to neglect and deny the universal life of which it is a part. The needs of the body are the needs of the divine spirit which lives through the body.

FAVORITE MEDITATION POSTURES

It is clear from Patanjali's definition of posture in aphorism 2.46 (see Lesson 1) that he had a meditation posture in mind rather than the typical Hatha-Yoga posture used as a therapeutic means. He must have known a variety of meditation postures, as several are mentioned already in the literature of Pre-Classical Yoga. The most popular *āsanas* now and then are the following: *paryanka-*, *danda-, sukha-, svastika-, siddha-, bhadra-,* and *padma-āsana*. These are mentioned, among other texts, in Vyāsa's *Yoga-Bhāshya* (2.46).

The *paryanka-āsana* ("couch posture") is referred to already in the early Buddhist literature many centuries prior to Patanjali. According to Vācaspati Mishra's *Tattva-Vaishāradī* (2.46), this posture is done by holding one's knees while reclining, at best a somewhat temporary position for meditation. Perhaps it was performed differently in Buddhist circles, just as today it is done in a rather more complicated way by arching back in *vīra-āsana* until the head touches the ground, which can hardly be said to be a good posture for meditation.

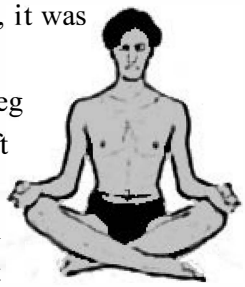
The *danda-āsana* ("staff posture") is done by sitting straight on a flat surface with one's legs extended in front and together, which, unless one is leaning against a tree or wall, is tiring on the back after a while.

The easiest crosslegged pose, as its name suggests, is *sukha-āsana* ("easeful posture"), which corresponds to our Western tailor's seat, except that the spine ought to be straight, as in all meditation postures.

The *svastika-āsana* ("all's-well posture") is executed by crossing the feet at the level of the ankles. Until Adolf Hitler perverted the *svastika* by giving it an unsavory political meaning, it was widely used as a positive solar symbol.

In performing the *siddha-āsana* ("adept's posture"), one must fold the left leg and tug the left foot under the perineum and then place the right foot on top of the left calf.

The *bhadra-āsana* ("auspicious posture") is done by bringing the soles of both feet close together near the genitals while placing the hollowed hands on top of the feet in tortoise-like fashion. The Sanskrit texts also offer other descriptions of this *āsana.*



sukha-āsana

The *padma-āsana* ("lotus posture") is the meditation posture *par excellence*. It is performed by placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh (or vice versa). If done correctly, the soles of both feet are pointing upward.

Often the classical descriptions of the meditation postures include precise instructions about the position of the hands and eyes. The former are called "gestures" (*mudrā*), the latter are technically known as "gazes" (*drishti*). Sometimes also the appropriate mental disposition is specified, all of which demonstrates that *āsana* practice is a fine art.

I will provide more detailed instructions on performing meditation postures in Lesson 11.

A Buddhist bodhisattva *seated in the lotus posture*

BODY-MIND POSTURES

Every activity needs body and mind in a particular position which should be stable and comfortable . . . A tired or sleepy man adopts a posture which is steady and easy for resting or sleep. A man who wants to run must adopt a posture suitable for running. A meditator also must adopt a position which is steady and stable for thinking and concentration. Every type of thinking is characterized by a particular position of the body, and, vice versa, every position of body indicates a particular type of thinking . . . The system of Yoga holds that body, as well as mind, has a dignity of its own . . . *Āsan*a, posture, is physical and mental exercise to help concentration, to develop body and mind by overcoming mental and physical diseases.

—Rammurti S. Mishra, *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology,* pp. 211-212.

Needless to say, success in one's meditation on the 'Endless' is in itself a considerable achievement in Yoga and therefore an *Āsana* perfectly mastered is much more than a simple posture; it implies mastery over certain subtle processes as well.

—Yogī Pranavānanda, *Pure Yoga,* p. 59

THE YOGIC VIEW OF THE BODY

We tend to assume that we know exactly what the body is. Yet, perhaps after a successful session in deep relaxation (see Lesson 1) or meditation, we are no longer quite so sure. Where does the body begin and where does it end? What is the connection between body and mind? Is our customary differentiation between inside and outside really such a certainty? With deep relaxation, which is basic to the meditation process, we experience the body as an open field, with the skin melted away and without sharp edges. The body feels like space itself.

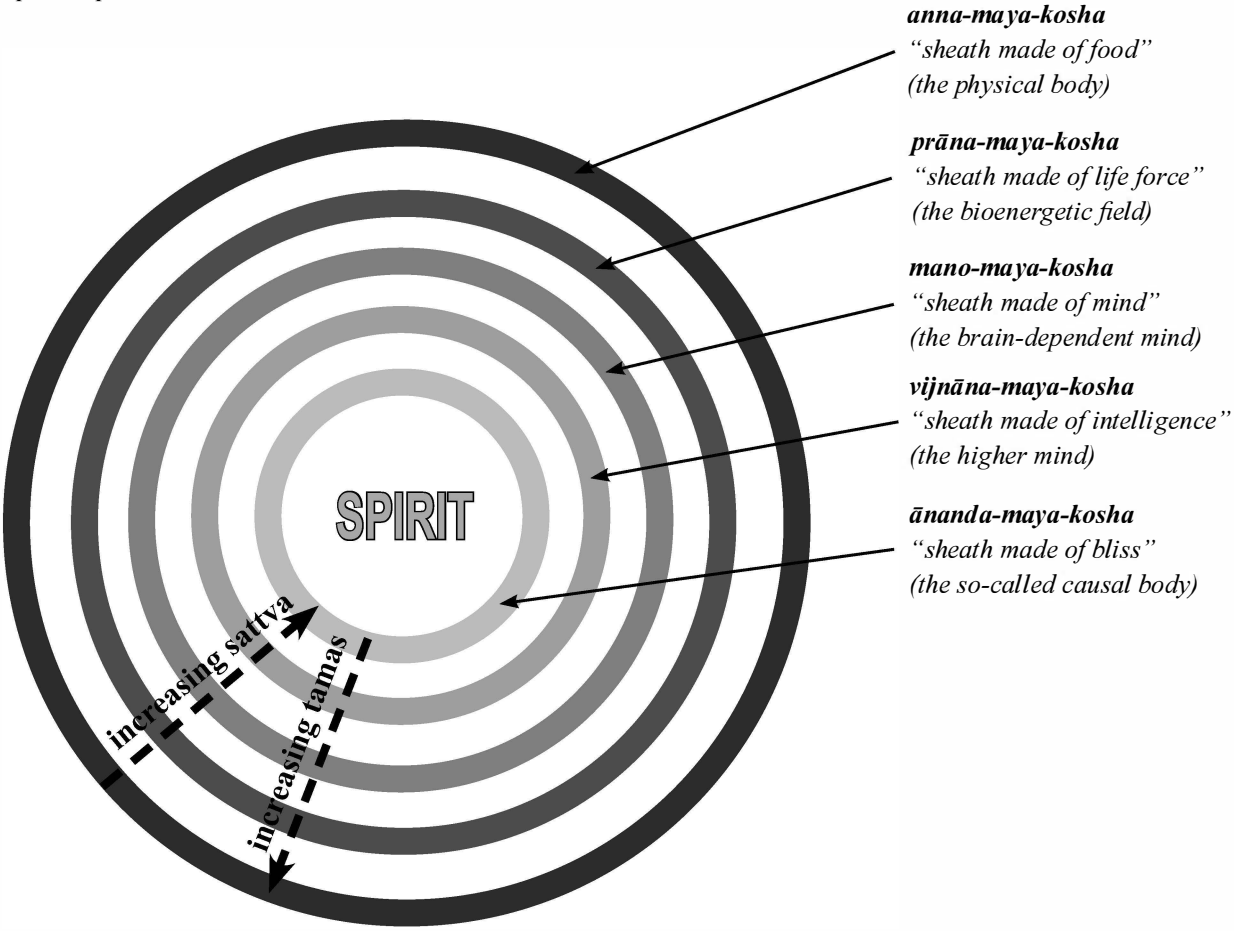
The *yogins* and *yoginīs* of yore have given much thought to the nature of embodiment and to how the body relates to both the mind and Spirit. They gave different answers to the riddle of bodily existence, but they all agreed that the physical body is the coarsest of all the veils that cover our true nature, which is Spirit. Because we trust our senses more than any other source of information about the world, we take the physical body very seriously. In fact, we take it so seriously that, under normal circumstances, we identify with it almost completely in everyday life. We even point to the body when we want to underscore who we think we are. Our "I," practically speaking, is our physical body. We identify with its sensations and the emotions arising within it, and not a few people even jump to the conclusion that when the body becomes lifeless in the moment of death, they themselves are annihilated.

Their experiences in advanced states of meditation and ecstasy, however, have taught *yogins* and *yoginīs* that the body is not the alpha and omega of their personal existence. They even have learned that mind and body can be separated and that the mind as we know it is not ultimate either. But Spirit, which is pure Being-Awareness, *is*! It transcends body, mind, and world.

Although our physical body has a lowly position in the hierarchy of existence, it is nevertheless an integral and important aspect of human life. It is the vehicle by which we taste all of life's experiences, be they desirable or undesirable, and by which we can realize liberation, or enlightenment. Whereas the verticalist types of Yoga treat the body as an obstruction to spiritual realization and regard it as a "dirty bag," the more integral approaches, notably Tantra-Yoga, celebrate it as a "temple of the Divine." But even the teachers of yogic verticalism agree that the physical or "meat" body is merely one dimension of embodiment, and that our embodied life extends to the subtle realm, which is the contact point between the material body and the immaterial mind. Thus the concept of *sharīra* or *kāya*—both terms meaning "body"—is more comprehensive than our Western understanding of "body."

Indeed, some schools affirm that our entire existence as a human being can be understood in terms of embodiment. Thus, the *Taittirīya-Upanishad* (2.7), which is at least 3,000 years old, proffers a model that accepts five "envelopes" or "sheath" (*kosha*) that surround and occlude the transcendental Spirit (*ātman*)

like a series of internesting lamp shades that dampen the source of light. The doctrine of the five sheaths (*panca-kosha*) is a fundamental teaching of Vedānta and many Vedānta-based Yoga schools. Here is a graphic representation of it:



Patanjali does not mention the five envelopes, but we can easily correlate this ancient schema with his own model of cosmic evolution. First of all, the five sheaths belong to the realm of the Cosmos (*prakriti*), with the physical body occupying the coarse (*sthūla*) level of existence and the remaining sheaths existing at subtle (*sūkshma*) levels. Spirit, by contrast, is "subtler than the subtlest," that is, utterly transcendental and pure Awareness (*cit*). The *prāna-maya-kosha* is subtler than the physical body and along with the *mano-maya-kosha* occupies what Patanjali calls the level of the particularized (*vishesha*). The *vijnāna-maya-kosha* belongs to Patanjali's level of *linga-mātra,* while the *ānanda-maya-kosha* must be equated with the *alinga* state of sheer potentiality. This leaves Patanjali's category of the unparticularized (*avishesha*) without correlation, because the doctrine of the five sheath does not mention the sense of I and the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*) separately.

◘ Now read Chapter 31 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

THE SUBTLE BODY

s+mxrlr

sūkshma-sharīra

The earliest reference to the subtle body is found in the *Taittirīya-Upanishad's* notion of the *prāna-maya-kosha,* which is the bioenergetic template of the physical body. As the Sanskrit term suggests, it is composed of life force, or *prāna-shakti.* The concept of *prāna* itself is much older and can be found already in the archaic *Atharva-Veda* (11.4; 15.15), which mentions five types of bioenergy:

prāna	—	the bioenergy associated with inhalation and the heart region
apāna	—	the life force connected with exhalation and the lower abdomen
vyāna	—	the prānic energy pervading the entire body
samāna	—	the bioenergy associated with the middle of the abdomen and the digestive function
udāna	—	the life force connected with the upper chest and head and with speech and belching

The *Chāndogya-Upanishad* (2.13.6) calls these five energy currents the "gate keepers to the heavenly world." This phrase suggests that by knowing their respective functions and achieving control over them, one can pry open the door to the inner heaven, that is, transcend the ordinary dualistic consciousness.

Patanjali mentions *prāna* (1.34), *samāna* (3.40), and *udāna* (3.39) by name and also would undoubtedly have been familiar with the concept of the subtle body, even though he does not refer to it directly. The classical commentators on the *Yoga-Sūtra* are in disagreement over whether there is a distinct subtle body or whether the phenomena associated with it (such as the yogic ability to leave the physical body at will) ought to be regarded as a special function of the mind. All, however, accept the existence of a life force (*prāna*), which pervades the entire cosmos and also is present in a structured way in association with the physical body.

The structures of the prānic field are the *nādīs* and *cakras,* which Patanjali acknowledges (see aphorisms 3.39 and 3.31. Both concepts are very ancient and found already in the *Atharva-Veda* and the earliest *Upanishads.* They became special objects of attention in Tantra-Yoga, and the *Siddha-Siddhānta-Paddhati* (2.31), a Tantric work of the eleventh-to-twelfth century, declares that a *yogin* is someone who knows (i.e., experiences first hand) these subtle structures. The *Yoga-Sūtra,* which was composed prior to the rise of Tantra-Yoga, says nothing further about them, however.

A central teaching of Tantra-Yoga revolves around the mysterious "serpent power" (*kundalinī-shakti*), and the question arises whether or not Patanjali knew of this phenomenon. Vyāsa, the author of the oldest extant Sanskrit commentary on Patanjali's work, is silent about the *kundalinī.*

That Patanjali should have mentioned the terms *prāna, nādī,* and *cakra* does not necessarily mean that he was familiar with the *kundalinī* concept, which seems to have made its first appearance in early medieval Tantra (c. 500 A.D.). While the phenomenon itself may well have been known to him, it either was not yet conceptualized in the typical Tantric manner in Patanjali's days or he chose to ignore it, perhaps because he considered it too secret. The Yoga texts, in general, do not disclose really advanced practical matters. If the Hatha-Yoga scriptures talked about the *kundalinī,* they also omitted a great many aspects of this process that have to be learned "by word of mouth" from one's *guru.* In any case, the *Yoga-Sūtra,* being intended as a philosophical work, was never meant to do more than provide largely exoteric knowledge about Yoga.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR THE SUBTLE BODY

There is some scientific evidence for the existence of subtle structures such as the *nādīs* and *cakras,* though a great deal more research needs to be done to satisfy the more skeptical scientist. To date, the well-known Japanese scientist Hiroshi Motoyama, Ph.D., who is also the priest of a Shinto shrine in Tokyo and author of over 50 books, has most consistently investigated the acupuncture meridians in relation to the *nādīs* and *cakras* by means of an electrical device invented by him. In 1962, he was awarded the McDougall Research Fund Award from Duke University and in 1996 the Dr. J. B. Rhine Biennial Research Award for his innovative research in parapsychology.

Another important researcher in this controversial area is William A. Tiller, Ph.D., a professor emeritus at the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Stanford University. Back in the 1970s, he designed a "gas discharge" device to measure the human "energy" field, and, among other things, he demonstrated the ability of the mind to psychokinetically influence the apparatus.

The demonstrable efficacy of homeopathy may also constitute possible evidence for the subtle body. Homeopathic remedies at a higher dilution (from C12 on) no longer contain a single molecule of the mother tincture. That is to say, homeopathic remedies work purely at an energetic level.

Also, the effective therapeutic work by hands-on healers like Barbara Brennan and her students speaks louder than words.

In 1839, the Russian photographer Semyon Davidovich Kirlian accidentally discovered what came to be called "Kirlian photography," which supposedly captures the human aura (energy field) and which was quite popular in Western circles for a time. Subsequent research, however, cast serious doubt on this explanation of the Kirlian effect.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Bachman, Nicolai. *The Language of Yoga: Complete A to Y Guide to Asana Names, Sanskrit Terms, and Chants.* Boulder, Colo.: Sounds True, 2005. [Includes CD]

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Suggested Yoga Practice
STRETCHING YOUR BODY-MIND

The following is a simple body-mind exercise that calls for no particular flexibility or strenuous effort and can be done by anyone in reasonable health. If you are pregnant, have a heart condition, hernia, neck or back problems, or have had recent surgery or an injury you should consult a physician first.

If you are already practicing Hatha-Yoga postures regularly, this assignment will pose no difficulty for you. Simply do the postures that you normally do but add the following two elements:

1. Before starting your sequence of postures, strongly visualize yourself suspended in infinite and peaceful space.
2. Perform each posture as if you were alone in that space, fully sensing your body and especially those parts involved in the exercise.

If you are not accustomed to practicing *āsanas,* however, please adopt for 2 weeks at least every other day the following exercise after carefully reading the instructions below:

1. Lie flat on your back, legs stretched out, and arms by your side. If you have lower back problems, you can reduce the strain by placing a rolled-up blanket beneath your knees.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Sense your body—skin, muscles, bones, etc.
4. When you sense your body strongly, then mentally feel into the space immediately surrounding your body, perhaps to a distance of about a foot, as if your sense of touch had become expanded. Take your time.
5. Then extend the distance gradually until you feel the space contained in the room in which you are practicing, and beyond its walls. Make this subjective sensing as vivid as possible.
6. Now return in your awareness to sensing your whole body, without losing the sense of the surrounding space.
7. Become aware that your body is sort of hovering in a much larger, still space.
8. After a couple of minutes of this, slowly and consciously stretch both your arms sideways away from your trunk, while simultaneously stretching your legs away from the center of your body. Avoid tensing so much that your neck, shoulder, or back will cramp

up. The arms slide along the floor. Also, make sure you don't hold your breath during this movement!

9. After a few seconds of stretching, relax your legs and arms and bring your arms slowly and consciously back to your sides.

10. Relax for about 20-60 seconds.

11. Next move your arms simultaneously, slowly, and consciously above your head, as close to the floor as they will reach without causing you discomfort in the neck, back, or anywhere else.

12. While extending your arms above your head, simultaneously stretch your extended legs as far as they will go. Thus both arms and legs are pulling away from the center of your body, affording you a wonderful stretching experience. Ideally, the arms rest on the floor behind you, though if your shoulders are not open enough for this, they are likely to hover above the floor, which is fine. Don't force anything! No involuntary breath retention here either!

13. After a few seconds, relax your legs and bring your arms consciously and slowly back down by your sides.

14. After relaxing for about 20-60 seconds, repeat first one than the other stretch but combined with vivid awareness of the space surrounding your body, as if you were stretching deep into that still space.

14. Then relax again as before, all the while feeling both the space within your body and outside of it.

15. Repeat this twofold exercise 4 to 5 times, with brief spells of relaxation in between.

16. During the final relaxation at the end of the exercise, vividly feel how you have been stretching both your mind and your body—a feeling worth maintaining throughout the day.

Much of contemporary Yoga is stretching the hamstrings. Authentic Yoga is stretching the mind until it melts into the infinite space of transcendental Being-Awareness.

For Reflection

1. How do you relate to your own body? Do you see it as a friend or as a saboteur? Do you feel comfortable with it, or do you feel uneasy about it? Do you enjoy physical activity, or do you prefer to be in your head? How do you explain your present relationship to your body? How does your overall attitude toward the body influence your practice of yogic postures, or disinterest in them?

2. Do you enjoy being outdoors in the fresh air and sunlight, or is your idea of having a good time being indoors reading a book? Do you like gardening, or do you find getting your hands dirty in the soil unappealing? How does all this relate to your views about Nature and life as a whole?

3. What is your posture like? Do you sit up straight, or do you tend to slouch? Judging from your posture, how do you read your level of vitality and emotional buoyancy? Do you feel inwardly free and happy or burdened by circumstances or your own mind?

4. What role, if any, does pretense play in your life? Do you, perhaps, sometimes "put on a happy face" without really feeling as buoyant as you pretend to be? Do you tend to hide your concerns and worries from others, or do you feel no need to conceal them? Is it important to you to "strike a good pose," or do you not particularly care what others think about you? Do you tend to cover up your mistakes and, perhaps, smile as if nothing has happened? Or do you get overly concerned about your slip-ups, wanting to make sure that others see you in the right light after all?

5. Are you "yourself" in formal situations, or do you slip into an official role wearing an impenetrable mask, because you don't want to feel vulnerable? Or do you tend to be on the formal side most of the time? If so, why? What do you feel might happen if you were warm and outgoing with everyone? Under what circumstances are you least likely to hide behind a formal role? With your partner, family, close friends?

6. Can you appreciate that one's physical posture or physical self-presentation in life is a matter of mental dispositions and attitudes, which one can change? For instance, the physical act of smiling actually alters one's emotional state, as does speaking a kind word to someone else. In other words, when we change our external behavior, we also affect our inner state. How willing are you to experiment with this in public? Can you see yourself smile at a stranger or say a kind word to someone with whom you have not had a particularly pleasant relationship?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

7. Do you like children? If so, what is it about them that you like? If not, what in your own life experience prevents you from relating to them easefully? Do you tend to "talk down" to children, or do you enjoy participating in their innocent world? For instance, do you ever sit down on the floor with them and, at their level, talk to them or participate in their games? Do you occasionally indulge in "silly" games, or do you believe that life is far too serious to do so?

8. Do you have a sense of humor? If not, what is it that makes you so serious? Do you get annoyed when others joke about your seriousness and suggest you "loosen up"? Or do you tend to use jokes and humor as a way of protecting yourself and holding other people at bay? When did this behavior start? How helpful is it really? Do you believe that laughter is to the soul what soap is to the body?

9. Do you feel it is important to be always well dressed even when you are at home, or do you not mind wearing casual, comfortable clothes around the house or even in public? What does clothing signal to you? Think of Yoga's five "sheaths" and ask yourself why a person might want to put on a sixth sheat (i.e., clothing) if not to keep warm? What about jewelry? Do you use it, what does it mean to you, and how attached to it are you?

10. If the physical body is not our true nature, how much attention should we pay to it? Why do we pay more attention to how our body looks and feels than to Spirit, which is our true identity? If, as some *yogins* suggest, the body is the temple of the Spirit, how should we relate to it rightly? How have you indirectly answered this question by your daily behavior? Do you treat your body respectfully, or do you "ride roughshod" over it? Or do you tend to simply neglect it?

"The human body has two ends on it: one to create with and one to sit on. Sometimes people get their ends reversed. When this happens they need a kick in the seat of the pants."

—Theodore Roosevelt

QUESTIONNAIRE 9

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. Who said that the *āsana* "is to the body what concentration is to the mind"? *(Check one)*

(a) the *Goraksha-Paddhati*
(b) the *Yoga-Bhāshya*
(c) Mircea Eliade
(d) B. K. S. Iyengar

2. Which of the following *āsanas* is mentioned by Patanjali?

(a) *padma-āsana*
(b) *siddha-āsana*
(c) *vīra-āsana*
(d) *bhadra-āsana*

3. Which of the following is NOT a meditation posture? *(Check one)*

(a) *danda-āsana*
(b) *siddha-āsana*
(c) *padma-āsana*
(d) *shava-āsana*

4. What is a *yoga-pattaka*? *(Check one)*

(a) another name for Yoga practice
(b) a yogic prop
(c) yogic relaxation
(d) an *āsana*

5. What is *nishadana*? *(Check one)*

(a) another name for Yoga posture
(b) a particular *āsana*
(c) a Gnostic text
(d) a Yoga mat

6. What is *āsandī*? *(Check one)*

(a) a kind of chair
(b) a yogic arm prop
(c) an *āsana*
(d) another term for *shava-āsana*

7. What does the word *ananta* convey in the *Yoga-Sūtra*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) infinite
(b) infinity
(c) endless/unending
(d) Ananta, the cosmic serpent
(e) Shesha
(f) Vishnu's cosmic couch

8. What is the original traditional purpose of *āsana*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) to create or restore health
(b) to sit comfortably
(c) to stabilize the body for meditation
(d) to experience nonduality
(e) to help the *yogin* create an adamantine body
(f) to calm the nervous system
(g) to make the *yogin* indifferent to heat and cold
(h) to induce a state of catalepsy

9. To which "sheath" does the bioenergetic field surrounding the body belong? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *anna-maya-kosha*
(b) *mano-maya-kosha*
(c) *prāna-maya-kosha*
(d) the pranic body
(e) the causal body

10. What is meant by *dvandva*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) in-breath and out-breath
(b) a yogic prop
(c) another word for *prāna*
(d) polar opposites

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

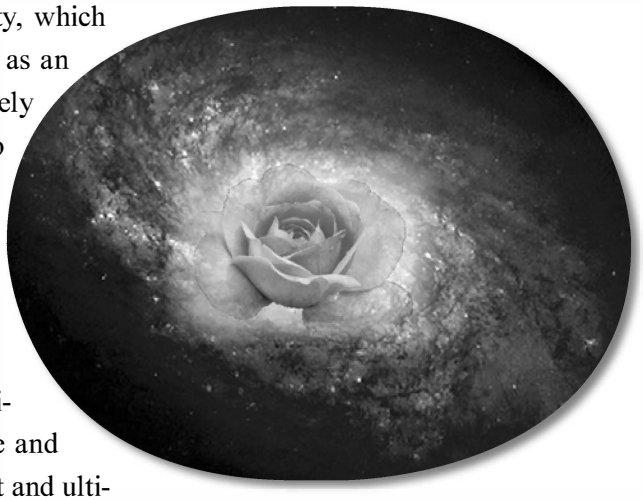
Lesson 10
The Breath of Life

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To learn about prāna, breath, and breath control, as well as alternate nostril breathing and the recitation of the hamsa-mantra*

- The Mystery of Life
- Life and Breath
- A Dialogue on Breath
- Evidence for the Existence of Prāna
- Prāna and Mind
- The Asceticism of Breathing
- The Physiology of Breathing
- The Secret of the Nostrils
- The Practice of Prānāyāma
- What is Hamsa?
- Prānic Healing
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Alternate Nostril Breathing
- "For Reflection"

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE



Life—*prāna* in Sanskrit—is a mysterious quality, which is not quantifiable. Some biologists define life as an organism that has cells and reproduces, but this merely begs the question. How many cells does it take to produce the phenomenon of life? Viruses are not normally said to be alive and yet they reproduce (sometimes to our great detriment)! Crystals "grow," yet are they alive? Since cells are composed of DNA and DNA is composed of atomic "particles," where does the element of life come in? The myriad definitions of life show that this property is quite elusive and continues to escape abstract thought, not unlike light and ultimate Reality.

LIFE AND BREATH

Being primarily interested in the human condition, the sages of India have anciently associated life with the breath, as did the visionaries of Judaism, Christianity, and Platonism. The equation *jīvana* = *prāna* has its equivalent in the Judeo-Christian where God is said to have breathed life into the original human organism, Adam. As Psalm 39 reminds us: "Each man's life is but a breath." According to the Kabbalah, one part of the soul is called *neshamah,* which is closely related to the breath, or *neshimah.* The words for the most subtle part of human life often also denote "breath": *spirit, pneuma, ruach, nephesh.* In Job 33:4, we find the phrase "the breath of the Almighty" by which God endowed human beings with spirit and life. Little wonder, the term *prāna* also carries the meaning of "spirit" in some contexts.

pa, पा

prāna, which is derived from *pra* ("forth") and the verbal root *an,* "to breathe"

Given the signal importance of *prāna,* in the sense of "breath," to human life, it is not surprising that the ancient *yogins* should have paid great attention to it in their quest for spiritual transcendence, freedom, and happiness. They carefully analyzed the salient aspects of breath and discovered the amazingly

- Now read Essay #52 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapter 16 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

A DIALOG ON BREATH (PRĀNA-SAMVĀDA)

Once upon a time, the bodily organs were arguing about who was the most important among them, and they went to the Creator (Brahma) for arbitration. He responded: “He by whose departure the body seems worst off is the most important.”

First Speech left for a year, and upon returning asked, “How did you manage without me?” And the others replied, “We lived like mute people, not speaking, yet we were able to see, hear, think, breathe, and procreate just fine.” So, Speech was not the most important.

Next Eye left for a year, and upon returning asked, “How did you manage without me?” And the others replied, “We lived like blind people, not seeing, yet we were able to speak, hear, think, breathe, and procreate just fine.” So, Eye was not the most important.

Then Ear left for a year, and upon returning asked, “How did you manage without me?” And the others replied, “We lived like deaf people, not hearing, yet we were able to speak, see, think, breathe, and procreate just fine.” So, Ear was not the most important.

The Mind left for a year, and upon returning asked, “How did you manage without me?” And the others replied, “We lived like foolish people, not thinking, yet we were able to speak, see, hear, breathe, and procreate just fine.” So, Mind was not the most important.

The Organ of Generation left for a year, and upon returning asked, “How did you manage without me?” And the others replied, “We lived like eunuchs, not procreating, yet we were able to speak, see, hear, think, and breathe just fine.” So, Organ of Generation was not the most important.

Finally, as Breath got ready go to, she uprooted the other organs, just “as a horse from Sind might uproot the pegs by which it is tethered.” Realizing immediately that they could not live without Breath. “Do not leave,” they cried, “you are the most important among us!”

—*Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad 6.1.7–14* (paraphrase)

EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF PRĀNA

In Lesson 9, I introduced some of the (possible) evidence for the existence of the subtle body. Much the same evidence would also apply to *prāna*, the life force or bio-energy that makes up the *prāna-maya-kosha*. This is the coarsest layer of the subtle level of existence, which is very close to the physical body.

Prāna, of course, is not the same as oxygen. The Yoga masters firmly believe that if our lives depended on oxygen alone, we would all long be dead, or rather never have tasted life! Oxygen and the other essential gases that make up air, notably nitrogen, represent merely the outer aspect of the life force. *Prāna* is a more subtle agent.

That *prāna* can be registered at all by any material apparatus is due to the fact that *prāna* can interact with electromagnetic fields. No physical device, however, can register the activity of the mind directly other than through the medium of the bio-energy or, at the bodily level, the electric impulses of nerves. The last-mentioned effect is explored by means of electroencephalograms (EEGs), for instance. At a still more subtle level, the subtle body merges into mind and thus is no longer accessible to the measuring devices of science, which are necessarily of a material nature.

In regard to the mind, we ought not to take theories that are based on a materialistic interpretation of existence too seriously. In other words, we should feel free to employ a wider notion of "evidence." Particularly, we should bear in mind what the masters of Yoga themselves have to say about *prāna* and other subtle realities. And more particularly, we should experiment with the methods of Yoga and find out for ourselves!

In China, *prāna* is known as *chi,* which is utilized in the Asian martial arts, such as Chi Kung, Kung Fu, Jujutsu, and Taekwondo, but also the Far Eastern systems of healing, not least acupuncture and acupressure. *Prāna* therapy also forms part of the yogic heritage. It is hard to imagine that so many diverse cultures should have availed themselves of the concept of *prāna/chi* and developed elaborate systems of combat and healing based on it if there were no substance behind this age-old notion. Perhaps mainstream scientists ought to be more modest in their criticisms of the concept of a life force and rather than rejecting it outright go about designing meaningful experiments that take traditional understandings into account.

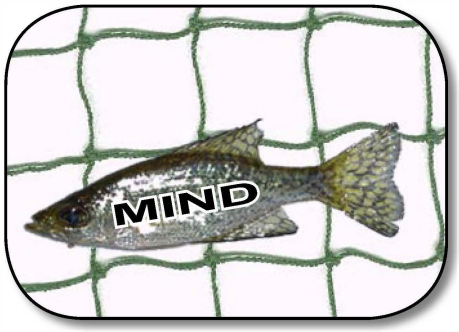
What is matter? — Never mind.
What is mind? — It doesn't matter.
But it does matter, and we should mind!

PRĀNA AND MIND

According to yogic theory, it is *prāna* (prompted by the mind) that activates the nerves, either in response to conscious or unconscious mental impulses. Conventional science has thus far failed to establish the mechanism by which our immaterial mind can affect our material brain, since the current model of science is purely materialistic and does not permit an interaction between an immaterial reality and a material structure such as the body. And yet, every day, trillions upon trillions of instances of just such interaction are occurring in the course of ordinary life. We think a thought, and it is translated into physical reality: We agree with someone, and our mouth phrases the word "yes." We decide to walk, and our legs are moving. We decide to open a door, and our hands obey. All these simple actions are an impossibity from a strictly scientific point of view, which denies the possibility of psychokinesis or the immaterial mind acting upon matter.

Some brain researchers, notably the renowned British physicist Sir Roger Penrose, have resorted to quantum theory to explain the body-mind interaction. Penrose speculated that the mind can interact with the brain through quantum effects involving the mind's directly impacting on the neurons of the brain. More precisely, the interaction is supposed to occur at the level of the so-called "microtubules," which are the molecular (protein) filament or cytoskeleton of the neurons. Put differently, our brain is a quantum computer. While Penrose's views on the mind-body problem have not won universal appeal, they have given researchers a new direction to explore. Curiously, even Isaac Newton thought that, perhaps, vibrations of the ether (India's *ākāsha*) might be excited by the mind and, in turn, directly excite the brain. The concept of ether, which has been thrown out by mainstream science, is intimately related to that of *prāna,* but this makes for a whole different consideration for which there is no room here in the present course.

The present-day scientific perspective is clearly limited, and ever since Albert Einstein, the Newtonian "paradigm" has become suspect as an overall explanation of how things work. But, then, Einstein's perspective is not universally applicable either but is a theory that applies to a specific range of phenomena. As a matter of fact, no theory can capture reality completely. As with a fishing net that has large holes, the small (but nevertheless important) fish always escape us.



> You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind.
>
> —M. K. Gandhi

THE ASCETICISM OF BREATHING

In Lesson 8, I introduced the Hymn of the Long-Haired Ascetic from the *Rig-Veda,* which talked about the *keshin's* mastery over the wind element and, as I conjectured, over the breath. Thus, the *keshin* can be said to have practices controlled breathing as a form of asceticism (*tapas*). This kind of yogic practice is referred to in some of the Sanskrit scriptures, notably Hatha-Yoga texts.

There are many ways to control one's mind, and focusing on the breath or harmonizing it through special techniques is one of them. Early on, the masters of Yoga particularly investigated the connection between breath retention and the arresting of thoughts. Various scriptures of Hatha-Yoga claim that in the state of ecstasy (*samādhi*), breathing stops. This is true of some ecstatic states at least, or breathing becomes to imperceptible that to the observer it seems that it has ceased.

Sperm whales, which can descend to more than 2,000 meters (c. 6500 feet), are able to hold their breath for up to an hour. While the average person gasps for air after just 20 to 30 seconds, some free divers have trained both their body and mind to extend this period considerably. Thus in 2003, the 31-year-old Italian Giancarlo Bellingrath held his breath underwater for 12 minutes and 47 seconds, but this was accomplished after pre-breathing 100 percent pure oxygen. As of January 2006, the official world record for static apnea without pre-breathing of oxygen is held by the German Tom Sietas: an astonishing 8 minutes and 58 seconds.

A number of free divers use Yoga to boost their capacity for breath retention. One of them is the American Annabel Brisenom, a former world record holder in freediving. Another is the Cuban freediving champion Francisco "Pipin" Ferreras, who has broken 50 world records in this sport, routinely attains depths of over 100 meters (c. 330 feet), his personal record being 170 meters (558 feet). Motionless, he can hold his breath for up to 8 minutes. Ferreras, who learned Yoga in Italy in the early 1990s, demonstrated his underwater breath retention to a local Yoga adept, who decided to try it out himself and managed to stay underwater for 14 minutes—an unofficial record. Ferreras's Yoga discipline, as with other athletes from his sport, includes meditation and visualization.

Francisco "Pipin" Ferreras

A human being is only breath and shadow.

—Sophocles

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF BREATHING

As long as we are alive, our breath moves automatically in and out. Along with blood circulation and digestion, breathing is one of the body's processes that is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nevous system is made up of the sympathetic "circuit" (by which we jump into thought and action) and the parasympathetic "circuit" (by which we relax). Without knowing the anatomical details behind this distinction, the *yogins* long ago have sought to dampen the sympathetic and boost the parasympathetic portion of the autonomic nervous system. Without exception, all *yogins* and *yoginīs* believe in "calm is good." Contemporary Yoga masters from India are stunned when they witness hyperactive Westerners and their Indian urban counterparts, who are constantly in the "fight or flight" (fear) mode typical of the sympathetic nervous system.

Our modern lifestyle, which has countless stressors, conspires to trigger the "fight or flight" response in us not as a reaction to a special threatening circumstance but as a habitual psychosomatic state. As a result (combined with inadequate diet and exercise), literally hundreds of millions of people around the world are suffering from hypertension.

One of the indicators of stress is the breath, which becomes irregular, shallow, and rapid. By comparison, the breath of Yoga adepts is typically deep, rhythmic, and slow, indicating a state of relaxation.

The physiological purpose of breathing is to oxygenate the blood and the body's cells and to flush out carbon dioxide, which is a waste product of cellular activity. The mechanism of inhalation occurs through the contraction of the intercostal muscles (between the ribs) and the diaphragm (which is pushed up into the thorax), expanding the chest, while exhalation occurs through the relaxation of the intercostal muscles and the diaphragm. The gas exchange happens in the alveoli of the lungs. All this is a rather complex process, which, as we know, has a great deal of potential for failure. Its smooth functioning depends on a variety of conditions, including our mental (emotional) wellbeing.

Everyone desires more life energy. If energy could be packaged and sold in a shop, it would be the most successful business ever. Mereley talking about energy excites and energizes people. Where can we get it, people want to know. Well, not in packets and not in shops because it is, first, everwhere and, second, free of charge.

—B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Life,* p. 65

THE SECRET OF THE NOSTRILS

Normal breathing is through the nose rather than the mouth. The nose warms, filters, and moistens the air before it passes down the pharynx (throat) and larynx (voice box) into the trachea (windpipe) and bronchial tubes of the lungs. At the end of each bronchial tube is a small air chamber filled with the grape-like alveoli surrounded by capillaries. There are about 300 million alveoli in our lungs, and their combined surface area amounts to c. 70 square meters (753 square feet), which is about 40 times larger than the surface area of the skin!

Lifestyle, diet, and our emotions undoubtedly impact on the physiological process of breathing and the anatomical structures involved in it. This is most apparent, for instance, when we examine the deleterious effects of smoking on the alveoli, or when we look at what happens when a person has an anxiety attack.

When experimenting with breath control, the *yogins* of yore discovered that nasal breathing has a natural cycle of 2 to 2.5 hours. During this span of time, what is called nostril dominance switches—in the healthy individual—from one nostril to the other. Modern science has confirmed this curious physiological effect and also has shown that the left nostril is associated with the right cerebral hemisphere and the right nostril with the left side of the brain. This discovery has important implications for our psychophysical health, and the *yogins* have exploited it not only for mental control but also for prognostication. Here we are concerned with the former benefit—that for the mind. According to Hatha-Yoga, when the so-called nasal cycle is obstructed (arhythmic or unilateral), this signals that our health is or is about to be compromised. Such obstruction also makes for mental disequilibrium.

The practice of deliberate alternate nostril breathing is meant to revitalize and harmonize our psychophysical being. It is known by various names: "channel cleansing" (*nādī-shodhana,* after the effect this exercise has on the energy channels of the subtle body) or "with the grain, against the grain" (*anuloma-viloma*). For practical instructions on this technique, see this Lesson's Suggested Yoga Exercise.

Pneumatic tools can cut through the hardest rock. In Prānāyāma the yogi uses his lungs as pneumatic tools. If they are not used properly, they destroy both the tool and the person using it.

—B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Yoga,* **p. 237**

THE PRACTICE OF PRĀNĀYĀMA

Alternate nostril breathing is one of the basic forms of breath control favored in Hatha-Yoga. Patanjali, who does not mention this technique, understand *prānāyāma* as breath extension, especially in the sense of retention (*vidhārana, stambha,* or *kumbhaka*). Here are his relevant statements:

1.34: PRACCHARDANA-VIDHĀRANĀBHYĀM VĀ PRĀNASYA

"Or [control of the mind is achieved] through [the controlled] expulsion and retention of the breath."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.34 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

2.49: TASMIN SATI SHVĀSA-PRASHVĀSAYOR GATI-VICCHEDAH PRĀNĀYĀMAH

"When this [state of deep relaxation in *āsana* is achieved], breath control, [which is] the cutting-off of the flow of inhalation and exhalation [should be practiced]."

2.50: BĀHYA-ABHYANTARA-STAMBHA-VRITTIR DESHA-KĀLA-SAMKHYĀBHIH PARIDRISHTO DĪRGHA-SŪKSHMAH

"The movement of [the breath can be] external, internal, and fixed [and is] regulated by place, time, and number; [it can be] protracted or contracted."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.49–2.50 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In 2.49, the genitive dual *prashvāsayoh* becomes *prashvāsayor* owing to the following *g* sound. Regarding aphorism 2.50, the present translation is more elegant and possibly more accurate than the one given in my book. The nominative *vrittih* must be changed to *vrittir* because of the following soft consonant.

Breath control is an important aspect particularly of Hatha-Yoga, as concentrated *prāna* is thought to be the means for awakening the dormant psychospiritual energy of *kundalinī-shakti.* To achieve this effect, *prāna* must be introduced into the central channel (*sushumnā-nādī*), which extends from the lowest *cakra* to the crown of the head, where the thousand-petaled *cakra* is located.

2.51: VISHAYA-ĀKSHEPĪ CATURTHAH
"[The movement of the breath] transcending the external and internal sphere is [called] the 'Fourth.'"

2.52: TATAH KSĪYATE PRAKĀSHA-ĀVARANAM

"Thence the covering of the [inner] light disappears."

2.53: DHĀRANĀSU CA YOGYATĀ MANASAH

"And [the *yogin* gains] fitness of the mind for concentration."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.51–2.53 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

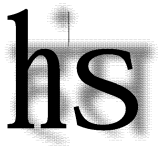
As is evident from the above aphorisms, Patanjali was primarily interested in breath retention. His statement in aphorism 2.51 refers to the kind of spontaneous retention that occurs in some states of ecstasy. Modern medicine knows of an analogous condition, which is known as *apnea*—a temporary cessation of the breath due to blocked nasal passages, enlarged tonsil or adenoids, or a neurological dysfunction of that part of the brain which controls breathing. Apnea can also be achieved through hyperventilation, which leads to a saturation of the body with oxygen. This state is analogous but not equivalent to the yogic *kumbhaka* ("pot"). Retention can follow either inhalation or exhalation, but in certain states of *samādhi,* it can occur of its own accord and therefore is distinguished from cultivated inhalation, exhalation, and retention. Training in breath control not only calms the body-mind but, as is clear from *sūtras* 2.52–2.53, also brightens up the mind and enhances the practitioner's ability to concentrate.

The mind is naturally luminous—its *sattva* catching the "light" of the Spirit—but when it is agitated owing to the influence of the causes-of-affliction (*klesha*), it becomes murky. Then it seems like there is a solid lid over the inner light preventing us from enjoying our innate luminosity. In the ancient *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (5.15.1), the seer prays:

> The face of Truth is covered with a golden lid.
> Unveil it, O Pūshan, so that [I who] uphold Truth may behold it.

An important phase in the history of Yoga is marked by the internalization of the Vedic ritual. This is epitomized in the practice of making one's breath into a ritual fire offering. That is to say, the very act of breathing is turned into a self-transcending yogic practice.This *prāna-agni-hotra* is mentioned in the *Kaushītaki-Upanishad* (2.5). The same archaic Sanskrit text (2.1) treats the breath as an immortal aspect of the human being, as do many other texts of this gnostic genre.

WHAT IS HAMSA?



hamsa

When dealing with breath control, the yogic texts frequently mention the concept of *hamsa* ("swan"), which stands for both the psyche (*jīva*) and the breath (*prāna*). It made its first appearance in the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (4.3.11), which speaks of the "solitary swan" (*eka-hamsa*). He is further identified as the immortal "golden person" (*hiranmaya-purusha*), that is, the transcendental Self (*ātman*), who sports in the world via the body and the senses but, in truth, is the eternal Witness.

In this *Upanishad* (4.3.19), we also find a reference to the metaphor of the falcon or hawk who, having become weary from flying around among the objects of the world, settles down in its nest to rest in a desire-free state. Unquestionably, we have here the seed of the later Hatha-Yoga teachings about the "swan" as the living being, whose life is sustained by *prāna.* To use a modern metaphor, if it were not for the pistonlike activity of the inbreath and outbreath, our psyche could not manifest at the bodily level. Nor could it exist at the subtle level other than the mind. The *prāna* currents make up that "layer" of the subtle body which is closest to the physical body and serves as its energetic template and as the medium for the mind to express itself either in the *prānamaya-kosha* or in the *annamaya-kosha* (see Lesson 9).

As the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* (3.18) teaches, the *hamsa* is embodied in the "nine-gated city," that is, the body. Yet, it oscillates outside the body, which is a clear indication that this dynamic principle is comparable to an energy field. It is by means of the *hamsa* that the *yogin* is able to consciously leave the body (which is a paranormal skill perhaps suggested in the *Yoga-Sūtra* at aphorism 3.43), and even, as other yogic texts mention, enter into another body at will.

> Even as a hawk, tied to a rope, can be brought back again [when it has] flown off--thus the [principle of] life, bound to the *gunas*, is pulled about by the in-breath and the out-breath. (1.40)
>
> Even as a ball, struck with a club, flies up--thus the [principle of] life (*jīva*), similarly struck by the in-breath (*prāna*) and the out-breath (*apāna*), does not rest. (1.38)
>
> Under the influence of the in-breath and the out-breath, the [principle of] life rushes up and down through the left and the right path. Because of this moving-to-and-fro it cannot be seen. (1.39)
>
> —*Goraksha-Paddhati*

Needless to say, there are many more secrets about this *hamsa*, which are merely hinted at in the literature of Yoga and which must be learned through personal practice.

The automatic continuous recitation of *hamsa-hamsa-hamsa* via inhalation and exhalation becomes the great *hamsa-mantra,* viz. *so'ham so'ham so'ham,** meaning "I am He," that is, "I am the Self (*ātman*)."

**So'ham* is the grammatically correct Sanskrit utterance *sah aham,* "I (*aham*) [am] He (*sah*)."

PRĀNIC HEALING

As long as we are embodied, *prāna* is involved in everything we do. Since ancient times, the *yogins* have made good use of this fact. In particular, they have experimented with *prāna* as a first-rate tool for healing themselves and others.

Even *yogins* do occasionally fall ill or hurt themselves. While their way of life, under normal circumstances, is conducive to good health, *yogins*—as some texts acknowledge—may fall ill because of faulty yogic practice or simply because negative karma is ripening. (Remember, everyone is subject to the surprises of their DNA!) Advanced adepts also are known to sometimes take on the diseases of their disciples, so that the latter may not be thwarted in their progress along the path. In all such cases, skillful *yogins* are likely to cure themselves by means of *prāna* manipulation. Since *prāna* is subject to the mind, it is easy to see how a *yogin's* highly focused mind can readily cause the *prāna* to behave in any desired manner in the body.

Perhaps I may be permitted to relate an anecdote from my own life here, as it may create faith in you. At one point during my discipleship under one of my teachers, I very badly banged my head on an overhanging rock while walking with him in the woods. I saw myriad stars, and my head started to pound immediately, making me feel queasy. He saw what had happened and touched the top of my head for a few seconds. All symptoms ceased, and I never even had a bump or scratch on my head. My teacher had simply "redistributed" the *prāna.*

He did what most people do spontaneously when they experience physical pain: to place their hand or hands on the painful spot. To do prānic healing does not require yogic powers, though obviously the ability to concentrate and visualize is a plus. While self-healing is always beneficial, I cannot recommend doing prānic healing on others unless one has properly understood the principles underlying this method, which is also known in the West as "laying-on of hands" and "therapeutic touch."

Combined with regulated, conscious inhalation and exhalation, healing by means of *prāna* can be very effective. This is one more reason to learn breath control.

Breath is the fly-wheel that regulates the entire machine of the body. Just as the control of the fly-wheel of an engine controls all other mechanisms in it, so the control of the external breath leads to control of the gross and subtle, physical and mental aspects of our life machine.

Swami Rama, *Lectures on Yoga: Practical Lessons on Yoga*
(Honesdale, Penn.: Himalayan International Institute, 1979), p. 93.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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If I had to limit my advice on healthier living to just one tip, it would be simply to learn how to breathe correctly.

—Andrew Weil, *Breathing: The Master Key to Self Healing*

Suggested Yoga Practice
ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

Sit comfortably on a chair or in your favorite meditation posture, providing you can keep your spine straight without strain for the duration of this exercise. As with your meditation practice, ensure that the phone is off the hook and you have eliminated as many other possible interruptions as you can. Then proceed as follows:

1. Consciously relax your body and mind. Resolve inwardly or, if you find this helpful, in an audible voice that you will dedicate the next 20 minutes to this exercise and will pursue it with a focused and joyous mind.

2. Begin by taking 12 *slow* full breaths, inhaling and exhaling through the nose. (This is not an exercise in hyperventilation, so please do not strain!) With each exhalation, visualize all stress, discomfort, worry, and negative energy leave your body. With each inhalation, visualize refreshing and energizing *prāna* enter your body. To achieve a full breath, extend your lower abdomen as you inhale, then extend the middle and upper parts of your abdomen, as the breath fills your lungs, and finally extend your chest allowing the breath to fill the upper portion of the lungs. Reverse this movement during exhalation.

3. After having done the full cycle of 12 breaths, check which of your nostrils is more open (or unblocked). If both are blocked or if your left nostril is more congested than the right, lie on your right side for a few minutes until the left nostril opens up. Another way of opening a nostril is by placing your fist under the opposite armpit and pressing it with the same arm. By resting on your right side or pressing your right armpit, your left nostril should open. Some *yogins* avail themselves of what is called a *hamsa-danda* ("swan staff," see illustration), which is placed under one or the other armpit. For this exercise, the left nostril must be open.

The T-shaped *hamsa-danda,* which is c. 2 feet high, is one of the few implements used in traditional Yoga practice

NOTE: If the left nostril doesn't open after taking either measure and you are not having a cold or are otherwise sick, you might check your nostril dominance repeatedly over the period of an hour or so to determine whether your left nostril is chronically blocked. In this case, a health condition might exist that you should investigate. If you know you are sick, have a cold, or suffer from some form of nasal obstruction, you can still do alternate nostril breathing *except* you must necessarily limit yourself to doing so as an exercise in visualization. In other words, you do not *actually* alternate the breathing between the two nostrils.

4. Assuming your left nostril is open, inhale slowly—while seated with the spine erect—through the left nostril by blocking the right nostril with the thumb of your right hand (the index finger and the middle finger are bent toward the palm). Without holding your breath, exhale equally slowly through the right nostril by blocking the left nostril with the ring finger of your right hand. (This traditional hand position is known as *vishnu-mudrā,* or "Vishnu's gesture"; you can also simply block either nostril with your index finger.) Repeat this cycle 6 times.

5. Repeat the earlier slow full breathing 6 times.

6. Do 12 more rounds of alternate nostril breathing, ending with exhalation through the right nostril.

7. Sit still for a couple of minutes before getting up.

Do this practice at least four times a week over a two-week period. If you are new to this breathing technique, you are likely to experience a noticeable change in your feeling state after each session. By the way, if you are feeling light-headed at any point during this exercise, you are either hyperventilating or turning this practice into breath retention, which is not the idea. Take it easy! The trick is to breathe neither too slowly nor too fast.

The Secret of the 21,600 Breaths

According to the yogic science of breath (*prāna-vidyā*), we normally breathe 21,600 times, which roughly corresponds to the figure given by modern scientists for the average number of breaths taken per minute (i.e., 15). The figure 21,600 is an idealized number, which is based on 108 x 200 (for the symbolism of 108, please refer to my online article "108: A Symbol-Laden Number" at *http://yrec.info/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=83*). 21,600 times per day, our body automatically recites the *hamsa-mantra,* which is *ham sa . . . ham sa . . . ham sa . . .* Esoterically, this breathing *mantra* translates to *so'ham . . . so'ham . . . so'ham* ("I am He. . ."). Thus, all one has to do is remain aware, or mindful, of this continuous mantric recitation via the breath in order to engage in a very potent yogic practice!

For Reflection

1. Do you believe that by slowing down your breath, you can at least potentially prolong your life? Or do you think that this is something of an old wives' tale? If this were true, would you be eager to extend your lifespan and, if so, what for?

2. What have you noticed about your own breathing? Is it naturally deep and rhythmic or shallow and irregular? How is your breathing tied to your emotions? Have you ever tried to calm yourself by deliberately breathing more deeply and slowly? Did you succeed? Or did the emotional stress in the moment get the better of you? Would you enjoy or find it meaningful to always be in a calm state of mind? If so, would you consider it worthwhile to spend a certain amount of time every day to retrain your breathing in order to acquire a peaceful mind?

3. Are you sensitive to people's energies, or do you not know what it might mean when someone says, for instance, "He has bad vibes"? Have you ever stepped into a room and immediately felt that the energy was dense or even dark? How did that energy affect your own? What did you do? Have you ever turned around and left, or do you tend to ignore your gut feelings or assume that you are wrong or that the bad atmosphere won't bother you too much? Do you have a mental technique for protecting yourself in such situations? Or do you just hope for the best? Do you accept the traditional notion that one can protect oneself against negative energies, or do you regard this kind of idea as humbug? If the latter, what is your rejection based on?

4. In his book *Light on Life*, B. K. S. Iyengar makes the point that through regular Yoga practice, notably breath control, we enhance our sensitivity greatly. As he puts it, "We are developing such an intense sensitivity that each pore of the skin acts as an inner eye . . . The skin provides our outermost layer of intelligence" (pp. 29–30). Do you think that this is a desirable condition? Or do you feel that such sensitivity would make one unfit for daily life?

5. How do you tend to replenish the body's energies, to "recharge the batteries"? Do you restore your bodily vitality by means of sleeping, conscious relaxation, posture practice, gardening, walking in Nature? Do you tend to ignore your body's signals of tension, tiredness, or exhaustion? Many people think they can rejuvenate their system by "relaxing" in front of the television or in the company of good friends. Do you think that this latter habit is really an efficient way of restoring one's energies?

6. Physics tells us that the smallest units of material existence are in fact energy quanta, which

Continued on next page

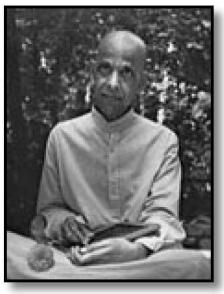
"For Reflection" continued

means that everything—including you—is essentially energy. If this is so, and there is no reason to doubt it, why is this not an everyday experience for us? Why are so many people complaining of lack of energy? Could our mind be responsible for the way we feel? Have you ever noticed how, when we receive a piece of good news, we suddenly recover from an energetic low and manifest instantly an abundance of personal energy? What is happening here? How did we mobilize this new energy? Is it possible that we habitually fail to live up to our true energetic potential? And how can we tap into it more efficiently?

7. Traditional Yoga authorities consistently claim that through the cultivation of *prānāyāma,* we can eliminate the emotional "blemishes" (*dosha*) that trouble the ordinary individual: fear, anger, greed, and lust, and so on. In what sense, do you think, could breath control have such an effect? Should we even hope to be able to eliminate all negative states of mind? In the absence of proper discernment (*viveka*), as taught by Patanjali, could breath control ever lead to the attenuation of the causes-of-suffering (*klesha*)? Or should we think of discernment as the primary practice and everything else, including breath control, as a secondary means?

8. That the breath has a deep association with emotional states is, among other things, demonstrated by the fact that through supervised accelerated breathing—the kind of therapeutic technique that is applied, for instance, in Stanislav Grof's "Holotropic Breathwork"—can put a person in touch with previously experienced traumas and inner emotional blocks, and lead to a cathartic reaction. This process is not without danger, especially if the person is unprepared for the emotional upheaval caused by rapid breathing. Do you think it is best to desist from using such drastic and potentially risky means in exploring one's psyche? Or should one ignore the danger and boldly proceed because the potential payoff is so great? What risks are you willing to take on the spiritual path?

There are eight traditional pranayamas, but because of differences among individuals they are not of equal use to everyone. The best, the easiest, and the one useful to all is called *anuloma viloma* pranayama . . . Because there is a balance in the movement of prana through the energy channels of the subtle body, there is no chance of causing illness in the body through its practice.



—Swami Kripalu, *Saying of Swami Kripalu: Inspiring Quotes From a Contemporary Yoga Master,* ed. by Richard Faulds (Greenville, Va.: Peaceable Kingdom Books, 2004), p. 29

QUESTIONNAIRE 10

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What is the literal meaning of *prāna*? *(Check one)*

(a) oxygen
(b) life
(c) breath
(d) breathing
(e) breathing forth

2. What is the literal meaning of *prānāyāma*? *(Check one)*

(a) breath of life
(b) breath control
(c) breath extension
(d) breath retention

3. What is the correct Sanskrit term for the symbolic fire sacrifice using the breath? *(Check one)*

(a) *agni-hotra*
(b) *prāna-yajna*
(c) *prāna-hotra*
(d) *prāna-agni-hotra*

4. Which Yoga text mentions that *prānāyāma* removes the five "defects" (*dosha*)? *(Check one)*

(a) *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad*
(b) *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad*
(c) *Goraksha-Paddhati*
(d) *Rāja-Mārtanda*

5. Which of the following terms designates alternate nostril breathing? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *anuloma-viloma*
(b) *pracchardana-vidhārana*
(c) *prānāyāma*
(d) *nādī-shodhana*

6. Which of the following statements is correct? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) The *hamsa* is an aspect of the mind.
(b) The *hamsa* animates to the body.
(c) The *hamsa* is a messenger between body and mind.
(d) The *hamsa* is a connecting link between mind and Spirit.

7. What does Patanjali mean by the "Fourth"? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) breath retention after exhalation
(b) breath retention after inhalation
(c) the highest state of Awareness beyond waking, sleeping, and dreaming
(d) spontaneous breath retention

8. What is meant by *divya-samvid*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) paranormal perception
(b) divine realization
(c) ecstatic coinciding with one's chosen deity
(d) insight derived from dreams

9. What is *hamsa*? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *ātman*
(b) *jīva*
(c) *purusha*
(d) *prāna*

10. Which of the following terms stands for breath retention? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *stambha*
(b) *vidhārana*
(c) *nirodha*
(d) *kumbhaka*

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 11
Controlling the Monkey Mind

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand the mechanism of the mind and Patanjali's method of going beyond automatic thinking*

- The Nature of the Human Mind
- Brain, Mind, Consciousness, Awareness
- Lucid Waking
- Desire and the Play of Attention
- Proper Posture for Concentration and Meditation
- The Yogic Gaze
- Steady Gazing
- Bull's Eye
- Inhibiting the Senses
- What is Concentration?
- Visualization and Meditation
- The Locus of Meditation
- Concentration and Meditation
- The Meditating Brain
- The Power of Prayer
- The Healing Mind
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Mindfulness
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 11

THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND

The commentaries on Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* include a consideration of the size of the mind (*citta*), which may strike us as odd. But consider this: If the mind is a product of the brain, as materialistic science insists, then would it not make sense to reduce it to the size of the brain or the nervous sytem, which extends over the body as a whole? Some ancient Indian thinkers thought that the mind is minute, atomic (*anu*), and resides at the heart. Others, pondering the fact that in our imagination we can be as small or as vast as we like, concluded that the mind must be infinitely flexible.

This last explanation seems to be the position taken by the major commentators on Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra.* The *citta* is the most plastic "substance" in the universe, apart from the transcendental core of the cosmos, *prakriti-pradhāna,* itself, which, however, is sheer possibility. The *citta* "pops" into existence out of that transcendental core, perhaps obeying the laws of quantum mechanics. Out of sheer possibility, we get statistical probability, which is computable, predictable, and measurable. Every moment (*kshana*) is a moment in which possibility can become probability. Whether or not this conversion occurs is tied to the mechanism of attention, a function of *citta.* Thus, the mind is intimately connected with the kind of world that arises for us—not in some naïve New Age sense but in the deeper sense of quantum mechanics. As Fred Alan Wolf explains in his highly readable book *The Yoga of Time Travel:* "*Possibility*-waves appear to exist purely within the sub-space-time realm. Probability-curves form our 'out there' consciousness; they mark time and bind the mind to the present. In contrast, *possibility*-waves form our 'in here' cosnciousness, free the mind from the present, and allow the mind to be free of time" (p. 170).

citta

As Wolf goes on to elucidate, our mind has the curious ability to form the "out there" material world of space-time. In other words, the mind constructs the reality we inhabit. "Practices like meditation," states Wolf, "offer us the prospect of adjusting the dynamics involved . . . opening the door to new possibilities 'out there'" (p. 171). Mind is nonlocal. It cannot truly be said to be big or small. Above all, pure Awareness on which the mind "rides," is utterly transcendental. It lends its "light" to the mind to give it the appearance of being conscious. In truth, all activity in the cosmos (including the human body-mind) happens at the level of *prakriti*, which, according to Patanjali, is infinitely plastic materiality. He would have us believe that this *prakriti* is utterly distinct from Spirit, but perhaps Kashmiri Shaivism and similar traditions offer us a better metaphysical model: *Prakriti* is the dynamic or energetic alter ego of Spirit, which or who is pure Awareness. The two are inseparable.

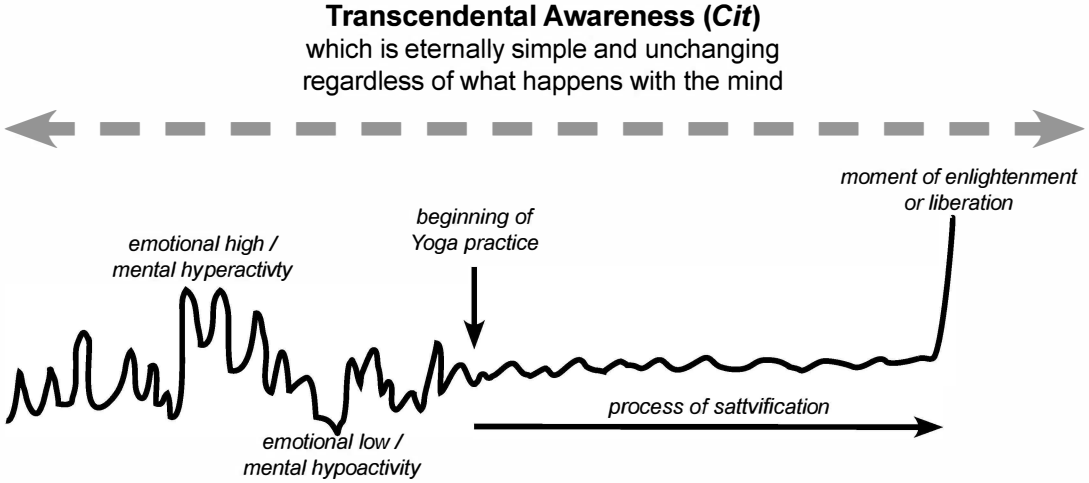
BRAIN, MIND, CONSCIOUSNESS, AWARENESS

Awareness, which is universal—that is to say, nonlocal like the mind—is our true nature, Spirit. Consciousness is what happens when we look at the mind in action. Mind is *prakriti* at a highly refined level of existence, where transcendental Awareness is reflected by the *gunas* as if they were conscious in and of themselves. The brain belong to physical materiality, which is the most coarse level of *prakriti's* existence and it acts largely as a filter for the mind and consciousness.

In our ordinary state of existence, we human beings make the fatal assumption that we are identical with the body and brain, which, we wrongly assume, generates the associated phenomena of mind and consciousness. This identification is the function of what Patanjali calls *asmitā,* "I-am-ness," a peculiar twist of the mind itself. Since we tend to firmly believe, at least in our everyday actions, that we are identical with the body, we cannot easily relate to the metaphysical notion that we are nonlocal Spirit (*purusha*).

Yoga's whole purpose is to re-educate us, so that we learn to distinguish between mind/consciousness and pure Awareness. This is the foundational discipline of mind training. As we discover the witnessing function as a possibility within ourselves, we learn to increasingly let go of the karmic habit of identifying with the body-mind, and thus we discover more and more our true nature as unchanging Awareness.

In the course of this journey of self-discovery, we inevitably transmute our reality by selecting what Wolf calls "possibility waves" other than the ones that are all-too-familiar to us. These lead to a gradual simplification of our internal world, and we start to experience more inner peace, harmony, and joy—all manifestations of *sattva*. Here is a graphic representation of this process:



LUCID WAKING

Most people are most of the time in a trance-like state or what the American psychologist Charles Tart has called "consensus trance" and other observers of the human scene have labeled "sleep walking." They are neither completely unconscious nor completely present in a conscious way. Their absentmindedness is a matter of degree. You might be talking to them, even giving them advice or instructions, but they do not quite hear what you are saying, and as their subsequent behavior demonstrates, what little they heard did not adequately stick in their memory.

So long as we are not enlightened, we all are among those people. A principle task on the yogic path is to be mindful, or consciously present, regardless of the circumstance. I call this "lucid waking"—a coinage inspired by the notion of "lucid dreaming," which became a popular topic in the 1980s through the publications of dream researcher Stephen LaBerge. The phrase "lucid dreaming," however, was first used by the Dutch psychopathologist Frederick van Eeden in his 1913 article "A Study of Dreams" (*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. 26). This seminal article was reproduced by Charles Tart in his *Altered States of Consciousness.* Lucid dreaming is being aware of a dream within that dream. I will say more about this later in conjunction with Patanjali's aphorism 1.38.

Just as we can become aware of our dream activity while dreaming, we can also learn to recall ourselves in the waking state, that is, we can learn to be mindfully present. Just ask yourself periodically: "Hello! Where am I now?" Are you present here and now or somewhere else, lost in your own thoughts? It is relatively easy to *remember* to be mindful while attempting to meditate, because that is the whole purpose of meditation. It is, however, a lot more challenging to remember to be mindful during the day, whether we are having a conversation or working by ourselves. If we tend to be scattered throughout the day, we will predictably find it very difficult to focus our mind in meditation. Conversely, if we have learned to stay focused in our day-to-day activities, our meditation practice will be correspondingly more skillful. Since we spend a great deal of time engaging in daily tasks at work and at home, we have plenty of opportunity to practice lucid waking, or mindfulness. If you are among those who find it difficult to sit still and meditate, or who doze off rather than focus in meditation, recalling yourself during the day a productive way to learn the art of concentration.

Remember your self always and everywhere.

—George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff
Aphorism inscribed at the Prieuré Study House

DESIRE AND THE PLAY OF ATTENTION

Attention is a curious mental facility; it is like a searchlight by which our mind selectively illuminates objects of interest. Since we tend to be interested in so many things, our attention is constantly on the move. These days we hear a lot about "attention deficit," which is the inability to focus one's attention on a given object or task in an adequate fashion. That is to say, the individual suffering from attention deficit has a particularly uncontrolled wondering mind.

kāma

Our nervous system is designed to recognize what is novel or unusual, and, as we all know from firsthand experience, we tend to get bored more easily with a familiar stimulus. At the same time, our attention migrates to those things that interest us, that is, that we find in some way meaningful. From a yogic perspective, attention is a mental function that ties into desire—whether it is desire for pleasure, comfort, food, sex, or information. Desire (*kāma*) is a root motivation in our life, and the mechanism of attention is largely enslaved to it. If we have many different desires, our attention goes in various—sometimes even opposite—directions. Thus, we might be sitting in a restaurant with a friend having a really interesting conversation (activated by our desire for pleasurable socializing or information), but then our attention may suddenly wander over to a scrumptious desert on the next table (activated by our desire for food and oral pleasure), or to a cute little dog coming into the restaurant with her owner, and momentarily our focus drifts away from the conversation and we have to ask our friend to repeat his last sentence. Or we might stop our car at a traffic signal and notice that the woman in the car next to us is eying her backview mirror while applying her lipstick and simultaneously speaking into her cell phone. We are watching this spectacle until the driver behind us emphatically honks his horn to let us know that the lights have changed to green and that we should pay proper attention to the traffic.

Some people are so scattered that it is impossible to have a continuous conversation with them; everything seems to distract them. In Yoga, we seek to cultivate the exact opposite disposition: We are holding our motivational forces (desires) in check and focus on the task before us, thereby training our attention to become ever more unwavering.

Disciplining our desires, as discussed in Lesson 5, is an all-important aspect of mind training. Unless we can develop at least a modicum of inner renunciation, or dispassion (*vairāgya*), our desires are like barking dogs that will disturb our quiet contemplations.

The greatest gift you can give another is the purity of your attention.

—Richard Moss, author of *The I That Is We*

PROPER POSTURE FOR CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION

dhyānāsana (dhyāna-āsana)

As I explained in Lesson 1, Patanjali understood *āsana* as meditation posture. While it is conceivable that he also knew of therapeutic postures, as they subsequently became rather prominent in later Hatha-Yoga, he makes no mention of this in his *Yoga-Sūtra.* He also provides no practical instructions for the performance of meditation postures, first because such details lie outside the scope of a philosophical *Sūtra* and second because traditionally anyone studying his work could be expected to be thoroughly familiar with such practicalities.

All Yoga authorities are agreed that the ideal meditation posture involves a straight spine for the free flow of psychophysical energy (*prāna*) through the central channel (*sushumnā-nādī*)—running parallel to the physical spine—by which the higher energetic centers (*cakra*) in the head are activated. Thus, in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (6.13) we find the following instruction: "Holding body (*kāya*), neck (*grīva*), and head (*shiras*) "even" (*sama*), stable, and immobile, gazing at the tip of one's nose and not looking in [all] directions, [let the *yogin* meditate]."

Vairocana

This succinct description includes two important elements: (1) erect and stable posture and (2) appropriate gaze (*drishti*), which can be turned to a fixed point externally or internally. The most systematic and complete instruction for the ideal meditation posture was formulated by the Tibetan Buddhist master Vairocana ("Illuminator"), who lived in the eighth century A.D. and is reckoned among the greatest scholar-translators:

1. The back from neck to lower back should be made as straight as possible ("like an arrow").
2. The legs should be crossed in the *vajra* posture (i.e., lotus posture).
3. The hands should be placed one of top of the other, four fingers' width below the navel (not resting on the feet), with the shoulders held up and back ("like a vulture").
4. The chin should be tucked in slightly ("like an iron hook").
5. The eyes should gaze relaxedly into space, about 16 fingers' width beyond the nose.
6. The tongue should touch the upper palate just behind the front teeth.
7. The lips should be slightly apart, without clenching the teeth and while breathing through the nose.

THE YOGIC GAZE

drishti

The stipulation to keep one's inward or outward gaze fixed acknowledges the fact that our attention often follows the sensory input received from our eyes. Thus, clearly, already posture includes an aspect of sensory inhibition, which I will discuss shortly. The undisciplined mind is inclined to roam among the sense objects (*vishaya*), that is, to be interested in the stimuli received via the five sense organs (*indriya*), of which seeing and hearing are the most significant for the concentration and meditation process, mainly because they afford the greatest distractions.

Although beginning practitiors commonly learn to meditate with their eyes closed, some Yoga masters (including Vairocana) recommend to keep the eyes open to avoid sleepiness, daydreaming, and inwardness. The Yoga scripures mention a variety of gazes (*drishti*) to be used for meditation, and the following three are the most common:

1. Gazing at the tip of the nose (*nāsāgra-drishti,* from *nāsa* or "nose" and *agra* or "tip")
2. Gazing at the middle between the eye brows (*bhrū-madhya-drishti*)
3. Gazing with eyes wide open (*pūrnimā-drishti,* lit. "full-moon gaze")

Each gaze actually corresponds to a particular mental state or, to put it differently, produces a subtly different kind of consciousness, which is easy enough to test. These gazes should be learned from a qualified teacher. Beginners may, however, readily use the gaze recommended by Vairocana, as described on the previous page. The half-open eyes of this gaze are sometimes referred to as *pratipad-drishti,* after *pratipat,* which refers to the moon in the middle of the month, while *amā-drishti* (closed eyes) corresponds to the new moon (*amā*).

Other gazes are employed in conjunction with various yogic postures. Whatever open-eyed gaze may be used, it is important to keep the eyes completely relaxed; that is to say, the gaze should be "soft." Eye strain leads to undesirable side effects (such as seeing wavy colors) and even can do damage to the eyes. Hence it is entirely misleading to translate *drishti* as "staring," as I have seen in a number of publications.

> Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,
> The holy tree is growing there;
> From joy the holy branches start,
> And all the trembling flowers they bear.
>
> —William Butler Yeats

STEADY GAZING

trātaka

A particular gazing practice, which can be used as a preliminary to meditation, is known as *trātaka,* which is part of the repertory of Hatha-Yoga. It consist in gazing steadily at a smallish object placed three or so feet away. The object should not be so large or complex as to cause the eyes to wander around. The flame of a candle has been found especially suitable for this practice, though the candle should be in a location where the flame does not flicker.

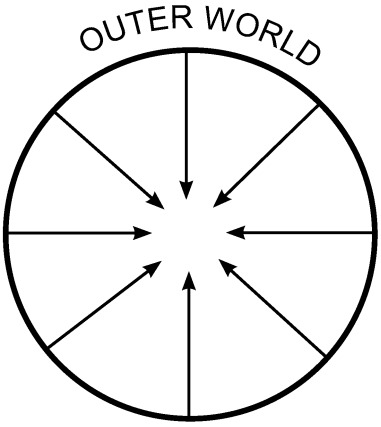
Gaze for about a minute in a relaxed manner at the middle portion of the flame, that is, by keeping the area around the eyes "soft" and the eyes themselves in "soft focus." After a while, the eyes will start to water. Do not forcibly prevent the eye-lids from blinking; this natural reaction will slow down of its own accord. When the eyes start to water or grow tired, close them and then focus the mind on the after-image of the flame created by prolonged gazing. When the after-image fades, you may want to resume the external gaze. And so on.

With each session, gradually increase the duration of gazing by another minute or less, whatever feels appropriate. Throughout the exercise, simply be consciously present (as witness). This practice is said to have many physical benefits in addition to the benefit of stabilizing the mind. Among other things, it apparently stimulates the pineal gland and also improves one's vision.

Bull's Eye

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, the successor of the famous Swami Satyananda (founder of the Bihar School of Yoga), once related a story about a *guru* who tested his disciples by giving each a bow and three arrows. All failed to hit the distant target. Then the teacher, after much posturing, shot the first arrow and missed the target so badly that his students were wondering what had gone wrong. In response to their question, he responded by saying that he had put himself in the shoes of someone who was overconfident, as had been several of them. Then he released the second arrow, which fell far short of its goal. Again the disciples were puzzled, and he explained that he had put himself in the shoes of someone who lacked confidence, as had been the case with a few of them. Finally, he swiftly raised his bow and released the third arrow, which hit the bull's eye. He promptly turned around and silently walked away. One student called after him, asking whose shoes he had put himself in this time. With a smile, the *guru* responded: "My own."

INHIBITING THE SENSES



Our senses are information-gathering devices, which allow us to navigate in the external world with adequate efficiency. When it comes to the meditative process, however, the senses can prove considerable adversaries. Their feedback to the mind constantly clamors for our attention. This evolutionary mechanism can be compared to "eating" the world of objects. The Sanskrit term for "eating" is *āhāra,* which stems from the verbal root *hri* meaning "to bring" or "to fetch." With the prefix *ā-* the verb acquires the connotation of "procuring" or "bringing to [oneself]." Little wonder that the senses have anciently been compared to horses that graze in the pasture of the visible world.

The *yogin,* wishing to cultivate a state of inward focusedness, must reign in the senses by means of the mind (*manas*). This process is technically known as "counter-fetching" (*pratyāhāra*), or "withdrawal": The senses are pulled back from their respective objects, and it is the mind that is pulling them back. Each sense is traditionally associated with a particular type of sensory object. There are five cognitive senses, which are known as *jnāna-indriya* (written *jnānendriya*) or *buddhi-indriya* (written *buddhīndriya*); five physical sense organs (called *indriya*); five types of sensory potentials, or "subtle matter" (*tanmātra*), as well as five material or "great" elements (*mahā-bhūta*). They are correlated as follows:

eye (*cakshu*)	—	seeing (*darshana*)	—	form (*rūpa*)	—	fire (*agni*)
ear (*shrotra*)	—	hearing (*shravana*)	—	sound (*shabda*)	—	ether (*ākāsha*)
nose (*nāsa*)	—	smelling (*ghrāna*)	—	scent (*gandha*)	—	earth (*prithivī*)
tongue (*jihvā*)	—	tasting (*rasana*)	—	taste (*rasa*)	—	water (*jala*)
skin (*tvāc*)	—	touching (*sparshana*)	—	touch (*sparsha*)	—	air (*vāyu*)

In addition to the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile sense, Yoga theory also acknowledges the existence of five conative senses (*karma-indriya,* written *karmendriya*): communication, manipulation, locomotion, digestion, and procreation/elimination, which are respectively associated with the mouth, hands, feet, anus, and genitals. The sense-oriented mind (*manas*) is generally regarded as the eleventh sense.

For the purpose of meditation, all eleven senses must be brought under control. The most challenging part of this process of control (*nirodha*) is the control of the five cognitive senses and the mind itself.

This is a matter of holding attention in check, and it is easy to see how this phase of the meditation process weaves between the senses and the mind. Thus what is known as sensory inhibition also entails an element of mental control, and mental concencration inevitably also involves a degree of sensory withdrawal.

Patanjali deals with sensory inhibition, the fifth "limb" of his eight-limbed path, in the following aphorisms.

2.54: SVA-VISHAYA-ASAMPRAYOGE CITTASYA SVA-RŪPA-ANUKĀRA IVA INDRIYĀNĀM PRATYĀHĀRAH

"Sense-withdrawal is the imitation as it were of the 'own-form' of the mind [on the part] of the senses by disuniting [themselves] from their objects."

2.55: TATAH PARAMĀ VASHYATĀ INDRIYĀNĀM

"Thence [results] the supreme obedience of the senses."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.54–2.55 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In aphorism 2.54, I have rendered *citta* as "mind" rather than "consciousness" and *indriya* as "sense" rather than "sense organ." What is meant by "own-form" (*sva-rūpa*)? This concept corresponds to what we might call the "nature" or "essence" of a thing—in this case, the mind, as it rests within itself without intruding sense perceptions. The senses are the mind's instruments (which is one of the meanings of *indriya*), which reach out into the external world gathering information. When they are suspended, they are simply potentials, and as such they are said to "imitate" the mind itself.

"Supreme obedience" of the senses is the same as mastery of the senses (*indriya-jaya*) mentioned in aphorism 2.41 (where it is said to result from purity) and 3.47 (where it is said to be attained through ecstatic constraint, or *samyama*). I will discuss this latter process in Lesson 14 in connection with *samādhi.* Mastery of the senses is a common notion in the literature of Yoga. Thus, the pre-Buddhist *Katha-Upanishad* (2.3.11) even defines Yoga as "the steady holding of the senses" (*sthīram indriya-dhāranām*). When the senses are held in check, this old Yoga scripture continues, one becomes undistracted (*apramatta*). Why is this important? Because, says this text, "Yoga is waxing and waning." That is to say, the state of stable control of the mind depends on effort, more particularly the effort of mindfulness. As the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (2.58–61) confirms when describing the person whose wisdom is firmly established, the *sthita-prajna*:

> And when he draws in on every side his senses from the objects as a tortoise [retracts its] limbs—his wisdom is well established.
>
> For the embodied one (*dehin*) who ceases to "consume," objects disappear, except for the taste (*rasa*) [remaining in the subconscious mind]. Even that taste disappears for him when the Supreme (*para*) is beheld.

> Yet even of the discerning man who strives [for sensory control], the agitated senses forcibly carry away the mind, O Kaunteya [= Arjuna].
>
> Subduing all [the senses], yoked and intent on Me [= Krishna], let him sit [in an easeful posture]. For he whose senses are under control, wisdom is well established.

Why is it so important to practice control of the senses? Why can we not simply allow the senses to govern our attention? The God-man Krishna answered this question in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (2.62ff.) by saying that contact with sense objects inevitably gives rise to desire (*kāma*), which, in turn, triggers all sorts of undesirable emotions and motivations, in the end leading to the obliteration of our innate wisdom, or understanding. In other words, as long as our senses present us with interesting possibilities for experiencing the world, we are bound to chase after them and, in the process, are likely to lose our head.

Regular practice of sensory inhibition, as we can learn from the following aphorism, significantly changes our mental disposition.

1.29: TATAH PRAYAKCETANĀ-ADHIGAMO'PY ANTARĀYĀ ABHĀVASH CA

"Thence [follows] the attainment of [habitual]inward-mindedness and also the disappearance of the obstacles [mentioned in 1.30]."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 2.54–2.55 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Grammatically, the *visarga* sound *h* of the word *abhāvah* ("disappearance," nominative case) must be changed to *sh* when followed by the letter *c.* The word *api* must be changed to *'py* because of the elision of the initial *a* and the following *a* sound. The plural nominative *antarāyāh* becomes *antarāyā* because of the following *a* sound.

Like the scattered consciousness of the ordinary person, the disposition of inward-mindedness of the *yogin* or *yoginī* is a matter of habit. From a yogic perspective, of course, the latter is a good habit, because it is more likely to put us in touch with our true nature—the transcendental Self-Awareness, or Spirit (*purusha*). Scatteredness, however, leads us deeper and deeper into the sensory world of the Cosmos (*prakriti*), where we become lost rather than liberated. So, habit in itself is not necessarily bad. In fact, most of human life is based on habit, and we can even see the laws of Nature as habit patterns. Thus, the yogic process can, in the first instance, be seen as one of substituting good habits for bad habits, but, in the end, all habits (*vāsanā*) must be transcended. This implies the total transmutation of the unconscious, or depth memory.

- Next read Chapter 17 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

WHAT IS CONCENTRATION?

Champion chess player Gary Kasparov

Unless we are suffering from a dysfunction, we all are able to focus our mind—more or less. At a certain age, even children are expected and able to concentrate, and at times, they become completely absorbed in their play. As adults, we concentrate on our tasks at hand, whether it be at work or at home or, yes, at play. Few people, however, are capable of the kind of sustained concentration that is the hallmark of a champion chess player.

But conventional focusing differs from yogic concentration in two significant ways:

1. The purpose of *yogic* concentration is entirely spiritual: to achieve a state of mind in which all mental functions can be transcendend in order to discover fundamental Awareness (*cit*).

2. Yogic concentration is combined with, or follows upon, sensory inhibition and is designed to lead to meditation (*dhyāna*) and finally ecstasy (*samādhi*). That is to say, it is part of a mental process that is more comprensive than conventional focusing: Attention is not directed toward any external object with the goal of stimulating action or thought but is, in a sense, turned upon itself via the witnessing function. This process is considered complete when the witnessing function itself collapses, whereupon the transcendental Witness (*sākshin*) abides in its object-transcending and transconceptual isolation (*kaivalya*).

dhāranā

ekāgratā

3.1: DESHA-BANDHASH CITTASYA DHĀRANĀ

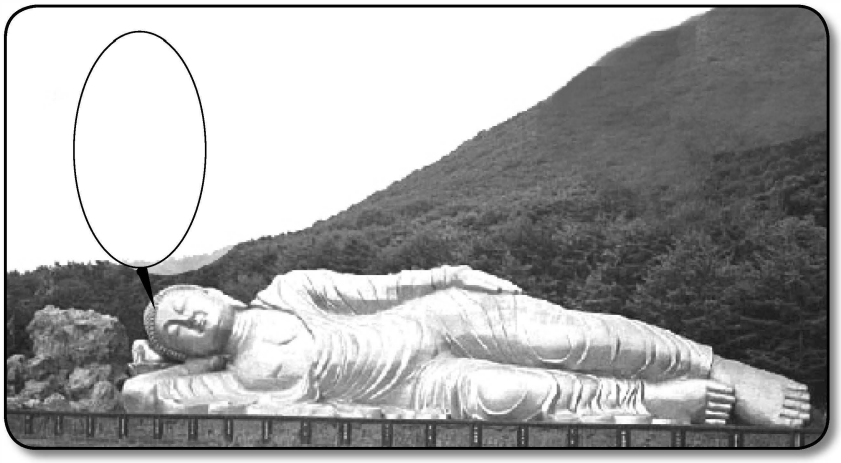
"Concentration is the binding of consciousness to a [single] locus."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.1 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Here the word *desha* ("place, location") is translated as "locus" rather than "spot," as in my book. Again, *bandhah* becomes *bandhash* owing to the following *c* sound.

- Next read Chapter 18 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

VISUALIZATION AND MEDITATION



The Buddha visualizing emptiness

Meditation has become popular in the West, but few of its practitioners fully appreciate the long history behind this spiritual practice, as it was developed to its present mature form in India and other Eastern countries. Patanjali's brief treatment of meditation does not immediately evince the immense sophistication of the contemplative practice and theory of Yoga.

?yan

dhyāna

Technical terms like *ekāgratā* ("one-pointedness") and *eka-tānatā* ("single flow") suggest, however, that his relevant pithy statements are far from improvised but are careful definitions grounded in an age-old psychotechnology. How must we understand the relationship between senory inhibition, concentration, and meditation? These three are clearly three phases of the same process and nearly imperceptibly flow into one another. As we pull back from the sensory world and turn our attention inward (*pratyak-cetanā*), the mind naturally focuses in concentration, holding our thoughts in check by fixing our attention on a chosen object (or, rather, idea) in the mind. When we do this again and again as a sustained effort, the same idea (or focal point) becomes more stably present in our mind. One-pointedness merges into the single-flow of of the object of attention, or the single flow of attention upon the same idea.

We know that we are practicing concentration rather than meditation when we are still struggling to prevent the focused-on idea to fade away from our attention. We keep recalling it, until the effort required to maintain it in our attention becomes less "muscular."

We enter the state of meditation when the idea on which we have chosen to concentrate no longer fades away quite so readily and when our consciousness of the "inner space" has deepened and we are less

drawn to pay attention to the external reality. This deepening is difficult to describe and is best experienced in person. What is involved, though, is that fewer and fewer extraneous ideas intrude and disturb the meditative process. When they do manifest, they can be more easily repelled without interrupting the central flow established earlier through concentration.

Research on meditators has shown that meditation corresponds to a neurophysiological state in which the brain generates primarily or even exclusively alpha waves, which occur when the eyes are closed and the mind goes into "soft focus." They are not, however, necessarily a sign of deep relaxation, as is widely believed. Nor are they necessarily associated with a state of mind that is inherently biologically regenerative. This may come as a surprise to many, but a good deal of the popular literature on the subject is based on inadequate research. Why, then, should we meditate? The answer is quite simply: to strengthen mindfullness and, ultimately, allow the state of ecstasy to arise, which then leads to a whole new level of mental discipline.

3.2: TATRA PRATYAYA-EKA-TĀNATĀ DHYĀNAM

"Meditation is the single flow of ideas in regard to that [object of concentration]."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.2 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Here the word *eka-tānatā* is translated as "single flow" rather than "one-directionality," while *pratyaya* is rendered simply as "idea" rather than "presented-idea," as in my book.

- Next read Essay #72 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

THE LOCUS OF MEDITATION

Patanjali leaves it open on which locus (*desha*) attention should be fixed during concentration and meditation. As explained in Lesson 6, he merely insists (in aphorism 1.32) that one should focus on "a single principle" (*eka-tattva*) in order to achieve mental control (*nirodha*).

The mind, as Vyāsa elucidates right at the beginning of his *Yoga-Bhāshya* commentary (1.1), has five basic operational states; it can be

1. restless (*kshipta*) — i.e., agitated and in constant motion
2. confused (*mūdha*) — i.e., dull and dim
3. distracted (*vikshipta*) — i.e., momentarily deflected from a focused condition
4. one-pointed (*ekāgra*, from *eka* + *agra*) — i.e., focused or fixed on a single principle
5. controlled (*niruddha*) — i.e., in a condition of deliberate, conscious restriction (*nirodha*)

The confused state represents a preponderance of *tamas,* the cosmic principle of inertia, while the restless state is dominated by *rajas* and the distracted condition is a composite of *rajas* and *sattva.* The one-pointed condition of the mind is due to a prevalence of *sattva,* which is still more preponderant in the desired state of *nirodha.*

When dealing with the various ways in which the fluctuations (*vritti*) of the mind can be brought under control, Patanjali specifically mentions several meditation practices, as follows:

1.33: MAITRĪ-KARUNĀ-MUDITĀ-UPEKSHĀNĀM SUKHA-DUHKHA-PUNYA-APUNYA-VISHAYĀNĀM BHĀVANĀTASH CITTA-PRASĀDANAM

"Pacification of the mind [is accomplished] by projecting friendliness, compassion, gladness, and equanimity toward objects—be they joyful, sorrowful, meritorious or demeritorious."

1.35: VISHAYA-VATĪ VĀ PRAVRITTIR UTPANNĀ MANASAH STHITI-NIBANDHANĪ

"Or [*nirodha* comes about when] an object-centered activity has arisen which holds the mind in steadiness."

1.36: VISHOKĀ VĀ JYOTISHMATĪ

"Or [*nirodha* is achieved by focusing on objects that are] sorrowless and illuminating."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.33; 1.35–1.36 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 1.33, the term *bhāvanātah* (changed to *bhāvanātash* for euphonic reasons) is actually the adverbial ablative of *bhāvanā,* which is the feminine form of the noun *bhāvana* meaning "becoming" or "cultivating." The term is often used in the sense of "meditation" or "visualization," and I have translated it here in the sense of "projection" in order to capture the actual practice. By sticking closer to the Sanskrit original and rendering *bhāvanātah* as "by projecting" also makes the whole sentence simpler. I have rephrased 1.35 to make it more readable. 1.35 reads literally "Or [*nirodha* comes about when] an object-centered activity (*pravritti*) has arisen that is [producing] for the mind steadiness-holding." I have made a minor clarifying change in my translation of 1.36, so that now "sorrowless" and "illuminating" no longer refer to "mental activities" but to "objects," meaning objects of concentration. Grammatically, the nominative *pravrittih* becomes *pravrittir* because of the following *u* sound.

The practice of the four "brahmic dwellings" (*brahma-vihāra*), referred to in aphorism 1.33, is a popular Buddhist meditation practice. Its name, however, clearly suggests a Hindu origin. According to Pabongka Rinpoche, this meditation technique, which also goes by the name of "Four Immeasurables," is done

as follows: Generating a strong wish to liberate all beings in the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism's *bodhisattva* ideal, one should then contemplate the Four Immeasurables, consisting of immeasurable equanimity, love, compassion, and joy. Carefully pondering each of these noble sentiments one after the other, one then radiates each of them into infinite space. In order to boost this transmission to all beings, one visualizes that all the subtle beings (deities, gurus, etc.) join in this effort.

There is no reason to assume that Patanjali's instruction to his disciples would have differed significantly from this Buddhist prescription. A detailed account of this magnificent exercise can be found in Pabongka Rinpoche's *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (for bibliographic details, see Further Reading).

1.37: VĪTA-RĀGA-VISHAYAM VĀ CITTAM

"Or [*nirodha* is achieved when] the mind is directed to [those beings who] are free from attachment."

1.38: SVAPNA-NIDRĀ-JNĀNA-ĀLAMABANAM VĀ

"Or [*nirodha* is achieved when the mind] is resting on the insight [arising from] dreams and [deep sleep]."

1.39: YATHĀ-ABHIMATA-DHYĀNĀD VĀ

"Or [*nirodha* is achieved] through meditation [upon any object] as desired."

1.40: PARAMA-ANU-PARAMA-MAHATVA-ANTO'SYA VASHĪKĀRAH

"His mastery [extends] from the most minute to the greatest magnitude."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 137–1.40 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 1.37, I have changed the rendering of *vīta-rāga* from "[beings who] have conquered attachment" to "[beings who] are free from attachment." In 1.38, the phrase *svapna-nidrā-jnāna* could also be translated as "insight/knowledge [arising from] dream sleep." In 1.39, I have added "[upon any object]" to make the meaning of the aphorism clearer. In 1.40, *antah asya* becomes *anto'sya.*

When Patanjali states that anything can be made an object of meditation, he means that any object can serve as a prop (or locus) for the meditative consciousness, that is, as a *desha* (lit. "place"), or anchor point for attention. As is evident from Chapter 3, all kinds of things can be used to achieve control of the inner environment and lead to the ecstatic state. Naturally, unless we are practicing *trātaka,* the object on which we focus must be a concept rather than a percept, that is, it must be an internalized object held in the "mind's eye."

Concentration and Brain Research

In 2004, a team made up of researchers from the University of Queensland (St. Lucia) and the University of California (Berkeley), studied 76 Tibetan monks who had been meditating regularly between 5 and 54 years. They concluded that these long-term meditators had significantly altered their brain. Among other things, the scientific team learned that these monks were able to focus single-pointedly on a given object and even had overcome the automatic neurological response of the eyes to wander between two visual objects when presented simultaneously through binocular goggles.

See O.L. Carter, D.E. Presti, C. Callistemon, Y. Ungerer, G.B. Liu, and J.D. Pettigrew, "Meditation Alters Perceptual Rivalry in Tibetan Buddhist Monks," *Current Biology,* vol. 15, no. 11 (June 2005), pp. R412-R413.

THE MEDITATING BRAIN

Brain research has shown that deep meditation produces high-frequency gamma waves and also leads to what is called "brain synchrony" (harmonization of brain waves). It appears that the meditative process particularly involves the left prefrontal cortex, which lies just behind the left side of the forehead. The findings have dispelled the long-held view that the brain synapses (the connection between the brain cells) are formed early in life and do not change. It turns out that the brain continues to develop and is capable of amazing change. This capacity is known as "neuropasticity."

The brain of long-time meditators is *physically* different from that of non-meditators, and that difference is in fact advantageous in various ways and thus is highly *desirable*. Science has finally confirmed what meditation masters have claimed for centuries. Now everyone can start or maintain a regular meditation practice for a very good reason. For, who would not want to make good use of the brain's facility for further development? Put in more traditional terms, our mind is always capable of growing and tapping into our amazing human potential, which includes the possibility of attaining spiritual liberation.

BRAIN WAVES

GAMMA: 30–80 Hz
(Higher mental activity, perception, awareness)

BETA: 13–30 Hz
(Conscious waking, anxiety)

ALPHA: 8–12 Hz
(Relaxed alert state, with eyes closed)

THETA: 4–8 Hz
(drowsiness, daydreaming, lucid dreaming, trance)

DELTA: below 4 Hz
(Deep sleep)

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Ever since the Vedic era some 4000 years and more ago, prayer (*prārthana*) has been an integral part of spiritual life. If we can agree that existence includes subtle, or higher, dimensions populated by beings who are invisible to normal vision, then we can perhaps also appreciate that we would benefit from a harmonious relationship with those beings. According to the Vedic seers (*rishi*), everything is interrelated and even interdependent—an insight that has been rediscovered not too long ago by quantum theory. Thus, human beings are not only part of their ecological environment but also are involved in the larger Cosmos of subtle forces and entities. In either context, there are obligations and responsibilities, as all traditional societies acknowledge. They tend to care not only for the living but also the dead (who are truly dead but simply alive at a subtler level of existence). What is often wrongly called "ancestor worship" is really the cultural practice of being in relationship to those who have departed from the visible realm.

In Yoga, the subtle beings who are most important are the departed masters and deities (or angels), who are present at one or the other subtle plane. Since time immemorial, *yogins* and *yoginīs* have turned to them for help. This practice presupposes that interaction between the material and the subtle levels of existence is possible, and the great Yoga masters assure us that this is indeed so. Therefore, they generally also recommend prayer as a viable means of contacting subtle beings and receiving their help. By virtue of their own spiritual realization, these masters themselves are active at subtle levels and hence can assist their disciples even when separated by many miles, just as they can benefit other beings at subtle levels.

Ever since the 1960s, medical researchers have been interested in the healing efficacy of prayer. A number of double-blind studies have confirmed that prayer works. In a review of the existing literature prior to 1990, Daniel J. Benor, M.D., found 131 controlled studies involving prayer or spiritual healing, of which 77 showed statistically significant results. Since then, many more studies have been conducted, some showing encouragingly positive results. Of course, they do not prove that God exists or intervenes, merely that intercessory prayer can work.

See Daniel Benor, "Survey of Spiritual Healing Research," *Complementary Medical Research,* vol. 4, no. 1 (1990), pp. 9-33.

The connecting link between the material plane and the subtle world is of course the mind itself. The mind properly belongs to the subtle dimension of the Cosmos. At the material level, the mind exists only in the form of the brain, which acts as a limiting filter on the nonlocal mind.

Prayer, like meditation, is a state of mind in which the attention is turned to the subtle level of

existence and by which psychospiritual energies are mobilized that can make a difference in in the physical realm. Mind over matter! If, as research has shown, good-hearted but yogically untrained men and women can pray effectively, Yoga practitioners with better control over their own mind can be expected to be be still more capable of unleashing healing energies for themselves and others who are in need of help.

◘ Now read Essay #73 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

THE HEALING MIND

By good and powerful suggestion, you can cure any disease. You will have to learn this science and practice it. All doctors of Homeopathic, Allopathic, Ayurvedic and Unani systems should know this science. They can combine this system along with their own systems. They will have a roaring practice by this happy combination.

—Swami Sivananda, *Thought Power.* WWW Edition, 1999, p. 20
http://www.dlshq.org/download/thought_power.htm

Mental actions are real actions. Thought is the real action; it is a dynamic force. It may be remembered, thought is very contagious; nay, more contagious than the Spanish Flu.

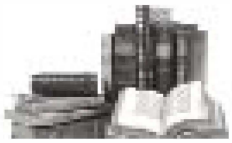
A sympathetic thought in you raises a sympathetic thought in others with whom you come in contact. A thought of anger produces a similar vibration in those who surround an angry man. It leaves the brain of one man and enters the brains of others who live at a long distance and excites them.

A cheerful thought in you produces cheerful thoughts in others. You are filled with joy and intense delight when you see a batch of hilarious children playing mirthfully and dancing in joy.

A thought of joy in us creates sympathetically a thought of joy in others. So do sublime elevating thoughts.

Keep a good and honest man in the company of a thief. He will begin to steal. Keep a sober man in the company of a drunkard. He will begin to drink. Thought is very contagious.

—Swami Sivananda, *op. cit.,* p. 13



FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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The literature on meditation is vast. A good overview is provided by Howard R. Jarrell, *International Meditation Bibliography, 1950-1982.* Scarecrow Press, 1985. For publications subsequent to 1985, see e.g. The Institute of Noetic Sciences' searchable online meditation research bibliography at http://www.noetic.org/research/medbiblio/biblio.htm.

For the record, a considerable number of the studies on TM (Transcendental Meditation) conducted by TM organizations or TM-friendly researchers have been found to be seriously flawed.

THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Apart from being an essential practice on the spiritual path, meditation has a variety of physiological advantages, including the following:

1. **It creates a hypometabolic state that affords the practitioner deeper rest than sleep.**
2. **It reduces stress and anxiety.**
3. **It encourages the body to secrete more of the youth-related hormone DHEA.**
4. **It improves memory.**
5. **It helps reduce chronic pain.**

Suggested Yoga Practice

MINDFULNESS

The following practice goes by various names and is especially popular in Buddhist circles where it is known as "mindfulness meditation." The Sanskrit word for "mindfulness" is *smriti,* which in the Pali language is *sati.*

If you are already practicing this or a similar type of meditation, simply continue with your familiar practice. If not, however, I ask that for **five days a week** over a **two-week period**, you practice the following meditation at first for **ten minutes**, then **increasing** the period of sitting **by one minute a day**:

1. Make sure the area in which you meditate is uncluttered, as harmonious as possible, and uplifting. It is possible to create such an appropriate environment even when living in a small apartment, for instance by using a screen. Switch off the telephone to avoid being interrupted by loud ringing.

2. Sit in an easeful posture with your spine erect. (See the description by the Buddhist adept Vairocana.) If you are sitting on a chair, make sure your feet are firmly planted on the ground. We tend to carry a great deal of tension in our neck and shoulders, and so it makes sense to pay particular attention to them.

3. Keep your eyes slightly open, gazing in front of you just past your nose. While beginners may find it initially distracting to meditate with half-open eyes, in the long run this is better than meditating with closed eyes, which tends to lead to drowsiness or trance-like states. Please ensure that you are gazing and not staring. The former is a relaxed nonseeing.

4. Affirm that you will sit for a specified length of time and intend to be as focused as possible. If you are too tired to meditate with adequate alertness, it is better to postpone the session. Drowsiness is not meditation.

5. Take a few deep breaths followed by long exhalations, while visualizing that you breathe out all stress and tension.

6. Be *really* present in your body. Don't take flight into the mind. Be present *here* and *now.* Don't become discouraged when your thoughts are jumping around like monkeys after just a few seconds. Stop feeding bananas to the monkeys, and they will calm down.

7. Whenever you are getting drowsy, check your gaze and body posture and make the necessary adjustment.

8. The mind is designed to think. So, it is normal that thought will come and go during this practice. Simply

allow them to arise, but do not become attached to them. The purpose of this exercise is to be present as a *relaxed, nonjudgmental witness*. If you are trying to force the mind into inactivity, this will never happen. The mind will then behave like a stubborn mule. When a thought arises, simply register "a thought is arising." Pay no further attention to it, however relevant or irrelevant a particular thought might be in everyday life. If an emotion wells up in your mind, simply register "an emotion is arising," again paying no attention to its origin or possible meaning. If a pleasant or painful sensation arises, again simply notice it and register "a sensation is arising." (Of course, you should not ignore a strong sensation of pain, as it may signal a potentially destructive condition of the body, such as acute nerve pain due to a bad sitting posture.) For the duration of this mindfulness practice, you are merely a nonjudgmental witness of everything that is going on in your mind. You neither embrace nor reject anything. By allowing your thoughts, emotions, and sensations to arise and subside without becoming interested in them, you are actually training yourself in dispassion (*vairāgya*). In due course all this internal activity will slow down of its own accord, and you also become increasingly able to practice mindfulness throughout the day. The inner space created by this practice will give you a sense of ease, joy, and freedom, and it also makes for a far less complicated relationship to life, thus reducing your suffering (*duhkha*).

Mindfulness practice is designed to undermine our acquired distrust in immediate experience. Normally, we run all our experiences through the filter of our mind in such a way that our past experiences, especially of the negative variety, color what we are experiencing in the present moment. A classic example is that of a person who, because of past negative experiences, has learned to automatically distrust men or women. However, not all men or women are untrustworthy. Thus, that individual is unable to relate to reality in an open and effective manner. When we look around us with the eyes of mindfulness—at our family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues—it is easy to see that most are in fact trapped in the past or are daydreaming (that is, trapped in the future). Very few are present here and now, and this can make for unnecessarily complicated and difficult life situations. Mindfulness is a great simplifier!

THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

I. The four objects of mindfulness, which are (1) the body (as the main source of egoic clinging), including sensations, (2) feelings/emotions, (3) thoughts, and (4) external phenomena, which all are inherently "empty," that is, they are without an abiding self, or essence.

II. Understanding the true nature of mindfulness, which is *prajnā,* or pure seeing, witnessing.

III. The two "supports," which are the disciplines of awareness and mindfulness.

IV. The actual practice of mindfulness.

For Reflection

1. Are you naturally curious about things, that is, do you find that you mind is frequently going out into the external world to acquire information and learn details? Or do you find yourself frequently just pondering your own feelings and past experiences? How does your extravertive or introvertive disposition affect your relationship to others and to the world at large? What are the advantages or disadvantages of your typical mental disposition?

2. What things naturally enable you to focus your mind? In other words, what tends to hold your interest? Some people are interested in clothes, others in gossip, and yet others in themselves. Then there are those who are obsessively interested in the news, in novels, or in facts. What tends to most hold your attention? And how does this interest shape your life? Have you made your main interest into a hobby or even profession? Would others think you have become obsessed with it? Does it interfere with your daily obligations? How would you feel if you knew that your main interest would preoccupy you lifetime after lifetime? Would this be an ideal situation for you, or would you wonder whether your interest is a limiting force in your life?

3. What are the things that you least like to pay attention to? Are you more interested in ideas than feelings or sensations? Do people find you too abstract, too emotional, or too sense oriented? For instance, when you see a beautiful sculpture, do you immediately also want to touch it? Or do you have a strong emotional reaction to art?

4. Which of your senses is most developed? Which is your least developed sense? What smells or colors do you find most appealing or most unappealing? What textures do you find pleasing or displeasing? How does this play into the kind of food you eat? Is color to you more important than texture and smell? Do you like the sensation of water splashing down on you, or do you prefer the sensation of gliding through a calm pond or pool? Do your own preferences affect what kind of flowers or food, etc. you give to others as a gift?

5. When you read a book, are you aware of the feelings projected by the author and/or your own feelings? Do you prefer books that have a strong emotional content over cool factual books, or vice versa? More specifically, do you enjoy reading novels and poetry over nonfiction? Or do you regard novels and poetry as "too subjective" or a "waste of time"? How is your attitude toward literature reflected in your personal relationships?

QUESTIONNAIRE 11

(Please **submit** your answers to tyslearning@sasktel.net)

1. In Classical Yoga, what is the relationship between mind (*citta*) and transcendental Awareness? *(Check one)*

(a) there is no relationship
(b) Awareness is a function of the mind
(c) the mind is a function of Awareness
(d) their relationship is only apparent

2. According to Patanjali, where does the sense of "I" orginate? *(Check one*)

(a) in *cit*
(b) in *citta*
(c) in *asmitā*
(d) in *prakriti*
(e) in *smriti*
(f) in *ahamkāra*

3. What is the Sanskrit term for meditative "gazing"? *(Check one)*

(a) *trātaka*
(b) *darshana*
(c) *sama-drishti*
(d) *drishti*

4. In the practice of *pratyāhriti,* what is being withdrawn? *(Check one)*

(a) *indriya*
(b) *manas*
(c) *citta*
(d) *vishaya*
(e) *tanmātra*
(f) *bhūta*
(g) *purusha*
(h) *prakriti*

5. To which of the five elements is hearing correlated? ***(Check one)***

(a) earth
(b) water
(c) fire
(d) air
(e) ether

6. What is the Sanskrit term for a dull mind? ***(Check one)***

(a) *tamash-citta*
(b) *mūdha-citta*
(c) *rajash-citta*
(d) *ekāgra-citta*
(e) *kshipta-citta*
(f) *vikshipta-citta*
(g) *niruddha-citta*

7. Which of the following constitute the four sentiments radiated to all beings in the practice of the Four Immeasurables? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *vīta-rāga*
(b) *muditā*
(c) *sukha*
(d) *maitrī*
(e) *ānanda*
(f) *upekshā*
(g) *karunā*
(h) *vishoka*

8. Who said "A cheerful thought in you produces cheerful thoughts in others"? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) Larry Dossey
(b) Daniel Benor
(c) Jon Kabat-Zinn
(d) Pabongka Rinpoche
(e) Swami Sivananda
(f) *Katha-Upanishad*
(g) *Bhagavad-Gītā*

9. The behavior pattern of which animal is typically used in the Yoga scriptures as a simile for the process of sensory inhibition? ***(In one word)***

10. According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* what happens when we get in touch with sensory objects? *(In a couple of sentences)*

11. Why is inner renunciation (or dispassion) considered to be so important to the practice of sensory inhibition? *(Write two or more sentences)*

12. How would you describe the relationship between *abhinivesha* and *kratu*? (*Write a few sentences)*

13. What role does intention (*samkalpa*) play in the process of Yoga? *(Write a few sentences)*

14. Explain the distinction between *ekāgratā* and *ekatānatā,* using your own words? *(Write a few sentences)*

15. How can mindfulness be a positive process when it involves the mind, which, as many Yoga scriptures tell us, keeps us enslaved to *samsāra*? *(Write a few sentences)*

16. How can prayer be a positive process when it involves intention and the notion that there is someone "out there" beyond our own mind? *(Write a few sentences)*

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Please don't skip the "For Reflection" questions!
Most of our students have found them extraordinarily helpful in their spiritual practice.

Lesson 12
Dealing with Emotions

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To understand the nature of emotions and how to deal with them in a yogic way*

- What are Emotions?
- Positive and Negative Emotions
- Emotions and the Unconscious
- The Principle of Cultivating the Opposite
- The Emotional Patanjali
- Emotions and the Sensory World
- Emotional Obstacles on the Path
- Undoing Old Habit Patterns
- The Bodhisattva Ideal and Loka-Samgraha
- Loka-Samgraha and Dharma
- Faith, Belief, and Knowledge
- Emotions and Healing
- The Blessing of Illness
- Further Reading
- Faith According to Krishna
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Emotions Review and The Four Brahma-Vihāras
- The Admonition of Rahula
- Reverence for Life
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 12

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS?

I know from my teaching days that many Yoga practitioners are wondering about the place of emotions in the yogic teachings, especially Patanjali's system. How should we look upon positive emotions like love, joy, pity, compassion, courage, and acceptance? And what about negative emotions like anger, fear, hate, disgust, and sadness? These are fair-enough questions.

Interestingly, the psychological study of human emotions is not as clearcut as one might imagine, and researchers do not even agree on what constitutes a basic emotion. Where they do concur is that emotions are mental processes that differ from cognitive (thinking) and conative (willing) processes. They believe that while some emotions are hardwired into our system, others are due to learning and socialization. They also distinguish between emotions and feelings. Emotions are spontaneously arising psychophysical states that are correlated with facial expressions, gestures, postural stance, and physiological reactions and that propell us toward action. Whereas emotions tend to be "raw" and short-lived, feelings are by comparison affective states that have been refined by the filter of the cortex and that are longer lasting. Moods, again, are negative or positive affective states that linger and tend to color one's cognitions and volitions.

Research has shown that emotions and feelings play a crucial role in attitudes and decision-making. In other words, we are not purely rational creatures—a point driven home particularly by Sigmund Freud and his followers.

bhāva

But none of their findings and speculations are found in any detail in Yoga theory. We do, however, encounter the significant essentials in the *Yoga-Sūtra* and other Yoga scriptures, such as the *Yoga-Vāsishtha.* Patanjali's theorem of the causes-of-affliction (*klesha*) affords a *practical* model that basically explains the dynamics between subconscious impulses (*samskāra*), cognitive states (like the various types of *vritti*), and motivating emotions (*bhāva*). None of Yoga's theoretical considerations have been worked out in the kind of detail that a contemporary philosopher or psychologist would expect. Ideas within the yogic tradition have changed little over the centuries, and it took a philosopher-sage of the calibre of Sri Aurobindo to develop a more sophisticated version of some of the theoretical concepts found in Yoga. For all practical purposes, however, the yogic theorems about mind and life are perfectly adequate and clearly can lead the dedicated practitioner to the traditional goals of inner peace, happiness, and freedom.

Some Yoga masters, notably the tenth-century Kashmiri adept Abhinava Gupta, have paid more attention to affective states in conjunction with the study of aesthetics. Abhinava Gupta built on the teachings of Bharata Muni, to whom the textbook on the dramatic arts, the *Nātya-Shāstra*, is attributed. This Sanskrit work comprises thirty-six chapters with a total of c. 6,000 stanzas (plus a few prose passages).

Sage Bharata, who is said to have lived between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., distinguished between emotions (*bhāva*), which actors can imitate in their performances, and the aesthetic sentiments (*rasa*) that

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rasa

these provoke in the audience. According to him, there are eight "stable" or standard emotions (*sthāyi-bhāva*) and thirty-three transitional emotions (*vyabhicāri-* or *sancāri-bhāva*), as well as a number of correlated psychosomatic experiences (*anubhāva*), such as weeping, trembling, flushing, and so on. The eight basic emotions are: love (*rati*), mirth (*hasa*), grief (*shoka*), anger (*krodha*), vigor (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*), and surprise (*vismaya*). These trigger the following eight corresponding sentiments (*rasa*): sexiness (*shringāra*), humor (*hāsya*), pity/compassion (*karunā*), fury (*raudra*), heroism (*vīra*), terror (*bhayānaka*), loathing (*bībhatsā*), and wonderment (*adbhūta*).

The transitory states are: detachment (*nirveda*), weakness (*glāni*), apprehension (*shankā*), grudge (*asūya*), intoxication (*mada*), fatigue (*shrama*), indolence (*ālasya*), distress (*dainya*), anxiety (*cintā*), delusion (*moha*), recollection (*smriti*), fortitude (*dhriti*), shame (*vrīdā*), ficklesness (*capalatā*), thrill (*harsha*), agitation (*āvega*), stupor (*jadatā*), arrogance (*garva*), despair (*vishāda*), yearning (*autsukya*), sleep (*nidrā*), possession (*apasmara*), dream (*supta*), awakening (*vibodha*), indignation (*amarsha*), dissimulation (*avahittha*), fierceness (*ugratā*), thoughtfulness (*mati*), illness (*vyādhi*), craziness (*unmada*), death (*marana*), terror (*trāsa*), and indecisiveness (*vitarka*).

We may be surprised by the inclusion of some mental phenomena in the two categories of "emotions" and "sentiments," while the absence of others may be found puzzling. But this is not important for our present consideration, and we can always add to the above list. What is important, though, is that all emotions and sentiments revolve around the ego, which the Yoga masters tell us is something of a phantom that we create. Also, what matters is that all these psychomental states are either conducive to self-understanding and self-transcendence and hence to liberation or they enmesh us more and more in the karmic world of change (*samsāra*). That is to say, they are either causing us suffering (*duhkha*) or lead us away from it.

Abhinava Gupta, the Yoga master, recognized that conventional drama reflected the conventional mind, and seeking to broaden the traditional conception of the emotional realm, he added a ninth sentiment (*rasa*) to the existing eight: *shānti* or peace, tranquillity. According to him, *shānti* is the source of all sentiments and is associated with love/devotion (*bhakti*). Without love, peacefulness is merely a state of empty withdrawal, while tranquillity combined with love is a radiant, positive state. Abhinava Gupta's theory effectively placed the dramatic arts on a more spiritual footing, and at the same time, it helps aspirants on the yogic path to relate to their own emotions better. For, if we can accept that between states of emotional excitement, the mind seeks to return to its natural peaceful mode, which includes an element of love, we can then always try to remember this truth in the midst of emotional agitation.

The mind is inherently like the empty, luminous sky. But as long as we cling to the illusory self, we do not abide in the true nature of the mind and instead become caught up in thoughts, emotions, intentions, and hence in suffering.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

In his exposition of Kriyā-Yoga (see Lesson 5), Patanjali groups all emotions into two fundamental categories, namely those that embody the principle of attraction or attachment (*rāga*) and those that represent some form of aversion (*dvesha*). This dialectical schema, which is analogous to some contemporary psychological models, does not straightforwardly correspond to positive and negative emotions, as is sometimes thought. Both *rāga* and *dvesha*, in the final analysis, are undesirable, because both originate from ignorance (*avidyā*), which is the matrix of all causes-of-suffering. Both are rooted in "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*), and both are linked with the survival instinct (*abhinivesha*). How do positive and negative emotions fit into this scheme?

Positive emotions are those affective states that from the perspective of the unenlightened mind strike us as beneficial and good. Negative emotions are generally viewed as destructive of peace, harmony, well-being, and the good. Few people would question the assumption that love and compassion are positive affective states, yet in the unenlightened individual, even these ordinarily highly praised affects have a component of egotism and ignorance and thus from a yogic viewpoint are karmically binding. That is to say, they do not necessarily lead us to the kind of inner freedom aspired in Yoga.

Thus *rāga* and *dvesha,* in the first place, suggest emotions, feelings, or moods, but they also can be regarded as comprising other mental events, notably thoughts and intentions. We know from modern psychological studies that thoughts come wrapped in feelings or moods. Some thoughts have a feeling tone that seems neutral, but often they come packaged in positive or negative affects. Thus the thought "I love you" is associated with a positive, warm feeling, while the thought "I dislike racism," though in itself commendable, is connected with a feeling that has a negative quality. The thought "airplanes are designed to fly" could be regarded as emotionally neutral, though for a person suffering from aerophobia (fear of flying), there will undoubtedly be a touch of negative emotion in the background of this particular thought.

EMOTIONS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

As can be gathered from the preceding aerophobic example, emotions can be trickered by the unconscious. In fact, a great deal of our mental life is steeped in unconscious processes. That Patanjali should have given the unconscious as much prominence as he did is a clear indication of the deep intro-

Please don't just speed read but genuinely consider the present discussion on emotions!

spection and understanding that mark the Yoga tradition. It is true, Patanjali did not coin a separate term for "unconscious," his treatment of Kriyā-Yoga leaves no doubt that he operated with this concept to explain psychomental life and the yogic processes designed to transform it. In aphorism 1.43, he speaks of the purification of the memory, or *smriti* (the deeper mind, that is the unconscious), through which the *yogin* attains a ecstatic states devoid of any thoughts. In aphorisms 4.8–9, he explains how this depth-mind (or unconscious) ensures that there is justice in the ripening of karma, so that an individual only harvests those karmas that were actually created by him or her and reside as "seeds" in the unconscious.

We can reconstruct his notion of the unconscious as follows: All experience leaves traces (called *samskāra*) in the unconscious, which is like a memory store. These *samskāras,* however, are not merely passive deposits, but dynamic forces that exert a pressure on the conscious mind. They conglomerate as tendencies (called *vāsanā*), which make up an entire stock (called *āshaya*) that belongs to a given individual. Now, significantly, this store of memories (*smriti*) is not the product of one's present life only, but represents the unconscious totality of all one's existences (or embodiments). In other words, this depth memory persists life after life and forms our most basic psychomental continuum.

What is the relationship between this depth memory and the wisdom faculty (*buddhi*)? Strictly, this question does not arise in Patanjali's system, which treats the mind (*citta*) as a whole and regards wisdom, the sense of I, and so as functions rather than solid categories of the mind. In other systems of Yoga, however, the depth memory could be considered as an aspect of *buddhi.* It represents a wisdom all its own, by which the continuity between lives is preserved. At the same time, when the depth memory is "purified" through ecstatic practice (that is, when the *samskāras* are gradually obliterated), this deeper aspect of the mind is penetrated by Awareness and becomes increasingly transparent to consciousness. This is part of the process of sattvification, which I explained in Lesson 4.

Yoga diverges from psychoanalysis in that the Yoga masters firmly believe that the unconscious can be completely illuminated and even made to vanish altogether—an assumption that Sigmund Freud and his followers would consider delusional. And yet, when we examine the lives of the greatest masters, we find that they were blessed with exemplary simplicity, honesty, compassion, and clarity, which cannot necessarily be said of psychoanalysts. Also, whatever the merit of yogic theory *as* theory may be, it was found adequate by the Yoga adepts themselves.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CULTIVATING THE OPPOSITE

When we understand the role of emotions in our life, it is easy to see how they also figure prominently in our engagement with the spiritual path and how in our striving for inner freedom, we must inevitably deal with the negative emotions that disturb the tranquil flow of the mind. Patanjali recommends a simple but powerful method: Whenever we are troubled by negative emotions, we should not dwell on them or develop guilt feelings about them but do our best to activate their positive opposites. This is the principle of *pratipaksha-bhāvana,* or "cultivation of the opposite," as mentioned in aphorisms 2.33–34 (see Lesson 7).

THE EMOTIONAL PATANJALI

by Georg Feuerstein

When I was still giving seminars, students would often ask me, "What about the emotions?" What indeed? Patanjali is curiously silent about such cardinal feelings or emotions as envy, fear, grief, guilt, hope, humility, jealousy, love, pride, remorse, resentment, shame, and so on. Contrary to popular opinion, however, he does not altogether ignore our affective life, as is evident from the following list of affects mentioned in his *Yoga-Sūtra*:

POSITIVE AFFECTS

aparigraha or "greedlessness" (2.30, 39)
ānanda or "joy/bliss" (1.17)
hlāda or "delight" (2.14)
karunā or "compassion" (1.33)
muditā or "gladness" (1.33)
samtosha or "contentment" (2.32, 42)
saumanasya or "gladness" (2.41)
sukha or "joy/pleasure" (1.33; 2.5, 7, 46)
upekshā or "equanimity" (1.33)
vairāgya or "dispassion" (1.12, 15; 3.50)
vaitrishnya or "nonthirsting" (1.16)
vishoka or "nongrieving" (1.36)
v*itrishna* or "nonthirsting" (1.15)

NEGATIVE AFFECTS

ālasya or "sloth" (1.30)
daurmanasya or "depression/dejection" (1.31)
duhkha or "pain/suffering/displeasure" (1.30, 33; 2.5, 8, 16, 34)
krodha or "anger" (2.34)
lobha or "greed" (2.34)
paritāpa or "distress" (2.14)
styāna or "languor" (1.30)
tāpa or "anguish/distress" (2.15)
vaira or "enmity/hostility" (2.35)

Most of the above positive (desirable) and negative (undesirable) affects, Patanjali leaves unexplained, and their exact meaning also is not obvious from the context in which they appear. They were

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undoubtedly clear to Patanjali's contemporaries.

Before we proceed, a terminological clarification is in order here. Emotions, feelings, moods, and attitudes are generally grouped under affects. Emotions are intense affects, while feelings carry a much milder charge. Moods, unlike temperament, are temporary emotional dispositions that arise in reaction to internal or external conditions, whereas attitudes are fairly stable predispositions by which we react in a more or less predictable way to stimuli from the environment (people, organizations, material objects, or ideas).

The *Yoga-Sūtra* was intended as a made-vecum for Yoga practitioners, and hence it appropriately focuses on the higher processes of Yoga, especially meditation and the various levels of ecstatic unification (*samādhi*). Patanjali simply took it for granted that anyone attempting the eightfold path as mapped out by him is emotionally stable and ready for the practice of sensory inhibition, concentration, meditation, and ecstasy. In other words, he showed no interest in the psychopathology of ordinary individuals and mentioned negative affects only insofar as they may arise as obstacles on the spiritual path.

Patanjali dealt with affects summarily via the fundamental categories of "attachment" (*rāga*, 1.37; 2.3, 7) and "aversion" (*dvesha*, 2.3, 8), explaining the former as "that which rests on pleasure" and the latter as "that which rests on pain/suffering." From his perspective, neither pleasure nor pain is deemed worthy of cultivation. Rather, the yogin seeks to promote a mental state in which the seesaw play of pleasure and pain is transcended in favor of a condition in which mental activity is controlled (*niruddha*). For the yogic process to be ultimately fruitful, control has to happen at three levels:

(1) *vritti-nirodha* or "control of the fluctuations" through the cultivation of meditation
(2) *pratyaya-nirodha* or control of (higher) ideation" in the state of ecstasy through the cultivation of formless or supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*)
(3) *samskāra-nirodha* or control of the subconscious activators through the event of seedless ecstasy (*nirbīja-samādhi*)

These three levels of control indicate a progressive deconditioning of the mind through ever higher levels of mental control to the point of actual enlightenment, or liberation (*kaivalya*). For Patanjali, this state apparently coincides with the recovery of our transcendental Identity (as the Self or purusha)-that aspect of our being which is free from all conditioning because it is devoid of the mind itself. The purusha, or ultimate Awareness Monad, is utterly transcendental and thus, strictly speaking, nonhuman.

According to Patanjali's opening definition in aphorism 1.2, Yoga consists in the control (*nirodha*) of the whirls of the mind, the *citta-vrittis*. But these are very specific types of mental activity, namely correct perception (*pramāna*), misperception (*viparyaya*), imagination (*vikalpa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and memory (*smriti*). To the consternation of many Western students of Yoga, emotions are simply not included in the *vritti* category.

Even when Patanjali talks about the motivating forces, he refers only to the five *kleshas*, or causes of affliction, which comprise ignorance, I-am-ness, attachment, aversion, and the will to live (or survival instinct). Attachment/attraction (*rāga*) and aversion (*dvesha*) are in contemporary terms "like" and "dislike." This dualism represents a simple but practical model of affective/motivational behavior. Ordinarily, we do not ever seem to be in a completely neutral disposition, and Patanjali appears to agree with this. We always experience shades of either attraction or aversion. Neutrality comes into play only when the yogic process of self-transcendence is

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involved, leading to a profound and persistent mood of equanimity (*upekshā*), or calm indifference.

Until this state of even-temperedness is attained, however, we must expect for varyingly strong emotions to arise, particularly in our interpersonal activities. Patanjali acknowledged this by insisting that spiritual practitioners begin by harmonizing their social interactions through the five moral disciplines (*yama*)—nonharming, truthfulness, nonstealing, chastity, and greedlessness. These are supposed to be practiced under any circumstance and without exception, which is easier said than done. In fact, the moral disciplines are very demanding and involve a complete retraining of our motivations. Because of the great popularity of Hatha-Yoga postures, many Western practitioners completely bypass the moral disciplines and thus the spiritual process itself, for the five yamas are not merely moral rules but corner-stones of spiritual life.

Patanjali tells us very clearly in aphorism 2.33 that if our practice of the moral disciplines should be threatened by undesirable mental states (*vitarka*) based in negative affects, we should immediately cultivate their opposites—a practice known as *pratipaksha-bhāvana*. Thus when our heart is filled with anger and we are on the verge of breaking the virtue of nonharming (either in deed, word, or thought), then we should at once engender thoughts of kindness and love toward the object of our anger. Unfortunately, the *Yoga-Sūtra* is not specific about how to do this. We can imagine that Patanjali might have advised his disciples to remember that they are the transcendental Awareness, or purusha, and are mistakenly identifying with the arising emotion of anger. Next he might have asked them to sit still, take a few deep breaths, and utilize the energy of anger by converting it into a powerful visualization of radiating positive energy and thoughts toward the person or persons who have become the object of anger. Of course, this approach presupposes a certain level of emotional control. An individual who is subject to fits of rage is incapable of assuming the position of the transcendental Witness. But then, Patanjali and other Yoga masters like him were not interested in teaching unqualified disciples.

What can we do when an intense emotional response is triggered in us? Yoga is clear that we must not just "let it rip." Unchecked expression of intense emotions—especially anger—is manifestly disruptive, harmful, and also debilitating. But neither do the Yoga masters expect us to repress anything, which is unproductive and damaging. They also would not quarrel with our using one or the other psychological technique for managing strong emotions until regular Yoga practice has balanced our mental life more. Once a certain measure of emotional stability and inner witnessing has been achieved, the technique of *pratipaksha-bhāvana*, or cultivating the opposite, works very well.

Emotions are an integral part of human existence. In their pursuit of liberation or enlightenment, Yoga practitioners are not expected to excise all emotionality. Rather they must, step by step, overcome negative emotions and refine or ennoble their emotional life. In this way, they also effectively contribute to greater social harmony and world peace.

To be a feeling person is virtuous.
To be emotional is counterproductive.

EMOTIONS AND THE SENSORY WORLD

Our encounter with the sensory world is seldom a neutral process. Rather, it affects us in various ways, not least at the level of emotions. As the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (2.62–68) explains in a classic passage:

Krishna

> When a man thinks of objects, contact with them is made. From contact springs desire (*kāma*), from desire anger is bred.
>
> From anger comes bewilderment (*sammoha*); from bewilderment [comes] disorder of the memory; from disorder of the memory [results] the destruction of wisdom (*buddhi*). On the destruction of wisdom, one is lost.
>
> Although moving with the senses among objects, the well-governed self unhooked from attraction (*rāga*) and aversion (*dvesha*), under the control of the Self, approaches serenity (*prasāda*).
>
> [On reaching] serenity, there arises for him the cessation of all suffering. For the clear-minded, wisdom is at once firmly grounded.
>
> For the unyoked (*ayukta*), there is no wisdom. For the unyoked there also is no "becoming whole" (*bhāvanā*). [For him who does] not "become whole," there is no peace (*shānti*). Whence [comes] happiness to the unpeaceful [person]?
>
> For, the mind (*manas*) that is obedient to the roaming senses carries away one's understanding (*prajnā*) like the wind [carries away] a ship in the ocean.
>
> Hence, O strong-armed [Arjuna], he whose senses are on all sides withheld from the things (*artha*) of the senses, his understanding is well established.

The senses interfere everywhere, and mix their own structure with all they report of.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Illusions," *The Conduct of Life* (rev. ed. 1876)

EMOTIONAL OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

In Lesson 6, we looked at some of the classic obstacles on the yogic path, but emotional blocks were conspicuous by their absence, and it seems appropriate to discuss them here, as Western Yoga practitioners certainly tend to be emotionally more complex, or should we say "complicated"?, than the typical Eastern practitioner. To recapitulate, aphorism 1.30 cites the following obstacles: "Sickness, lethargy, doubt, heedlessness, sloth, dissipation, false vision, non-attaining of the stages [of Yoga] and instability [in these stages] are the distractions of consciousness; these are the obstacles." Of these, only lethargy can be said to be an actual emotion, but we can readily imagine the other obstacles also having an emotional component, notably doubt, sloth, heedlessness, and dissipation.

But what about such strong emotions as anger, fear, revulsion, jealousy, and lust? Clearly, when they are in full swing, it is virtually impossible for the mind to attain a state of equilibrium. Therefore, the Yoga practitioner is always advised to maintain calm, through inner renunciation and mindfulness, so that the negative emotions do not even arise. Once a negative emotion has taken hold of the mind, it is best controlled by evoking its opposite and, in general, pondering the destructiveness of such emotions and the benefit of tranquillity.

For instance, if anger toward another person arises, it is beneficial to recall that all persons have flaws or make mistakes and that they, like us, deserve kindness and consideration. All beings are subject to the play of the primary qualities (*guna*) of the Cosmos and therefore are also subject to ignorance (*avidyā*), "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*), and the other causes-of-affliction (*klesha*). Moreover, anger, which is a manifestation of *rajas,* merely enhances the presence of *rajas* and thus makes a situation highly unstable. As anger increases, it becomes a hugely destructive force. Therefore, it behooves us to control anger the moment it is rears its ugly head.

In the Buddhist Yoga tradition, the practitioner is exhorted to remember that in the beginningless cycle of life and death, all beings have repeatedly been parents to each other. The person we dislike or despise now is likely to have been our mother at some point, and hence we should treat him or her with appropriate kindness. Even if we do not believe in an infinite cycle of reembodiments, we can still look upon all other beings as both needing and deserving kindness. We all carry psychological wounds around with us, and these tend to color our perceptions and provoke negative emotional reactions in us. In light of this, it is best if everyone were to cultivate patience, tolerance, forgiveness, and kindness. If another person does not (yet) have sufficient self-understanding and self-discipline to avoid negative emotions, as practitioners of Yoga it is incumbent on us to behave differently. Nonharming (*ahimsā*) is the foundation of Yoga practice. Without it, we cannot hope to succeed on the spiritual path.

UNDOING OLD HABIT PATTERNS

It is important to realize that the Yoga masters do not ask us to suppress our emotions! Anything we just "stuff down" is bound to pop up again sooner or later. This is in fact exactly what the *samskāras,* or subliminal activators, in the hidden recesses of our mind are: stuffed-down reactions. They sit and fester in the unconscious, and then periodically, given the wrong kind of stimulus, they make their influence felt in the way we think, feel, and act.

One of the objectives of Yoga, as we learned in Lesson 5, is to neutralize and altogether eliminate the contents of the unconscious, to empty out the whole store of *samskāras* lying in wait for us, ready to strike at any time. It would serve no purpose for us to suppress or repress negative emotions. Rather, the Yoga practitioner is expected to cultivate positive emotions and to do so especially when particular situations have triggered negative emotions. Instead of allowing negative emotions to run their destructive course, the *yogin* or *yoginī* must energetically invoke their opposite. While this procedure is seldom easy, it clearly is feasible and efficient. Repeatedly reacting positively in this way is also a habit, just like reacting negatively can be a habit. The obvious difference is that positive habits yield positive or auspicious states of mind.

All states of mind, to be sure, are karmic. But only positive (nonafflicted, *aklishta*) states are associated with the generation of *sattva,* the psychocosmic factor of lucidity, or transparency, which is essential for the eventual recovery of our true nature.

As mentioned in Lesson 5, the karmic deposit (*karma-āshaya*) in the unconscious part of the mind, or what Patanjali (aphorism) calls "memory," is constantly exerting pressure on the conscious mind, which is why it is so difficult to control our thoughts. Yet, right in aphorism 1.2, Patanjali makes it clear that Yoga is the control of the mind's fluctuations (*vritti*).

2.11: DHYĀNA-HEYĀS TAD-VRITTAYAH

"The fluctuations of these [causes-of-affliction (*klesha*)] are to be overcome by meditation."

2.10: TE PRATIPRASAVA-HEYĀH SŪKSHMĀH

"These [causes-of-affliction], [in their] subtle [form], are to be overcome by the process-of-involution."

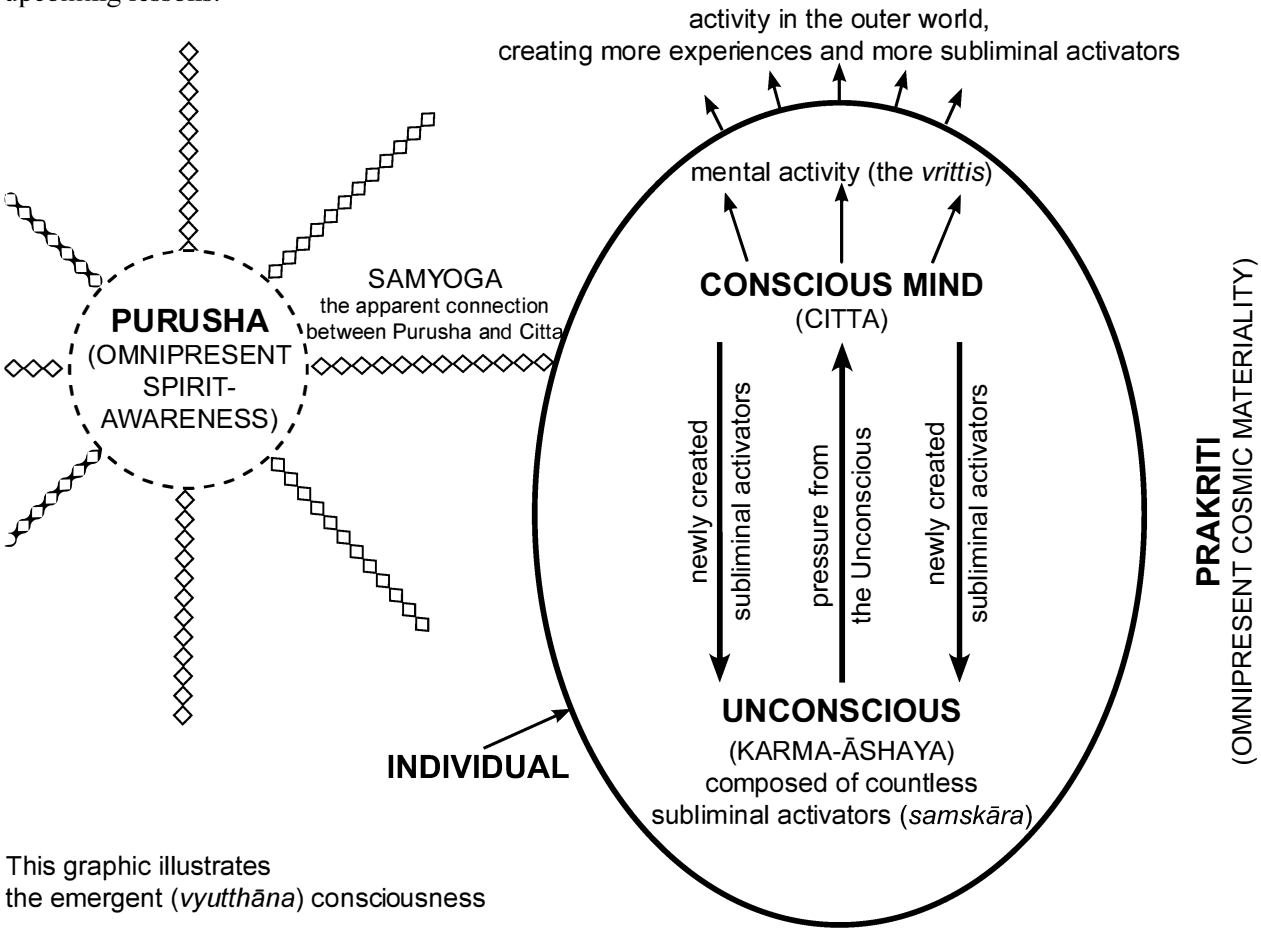
- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.11 and 2.10 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: The word *heyāh* becomes *heyās* because of the following *t* sound.

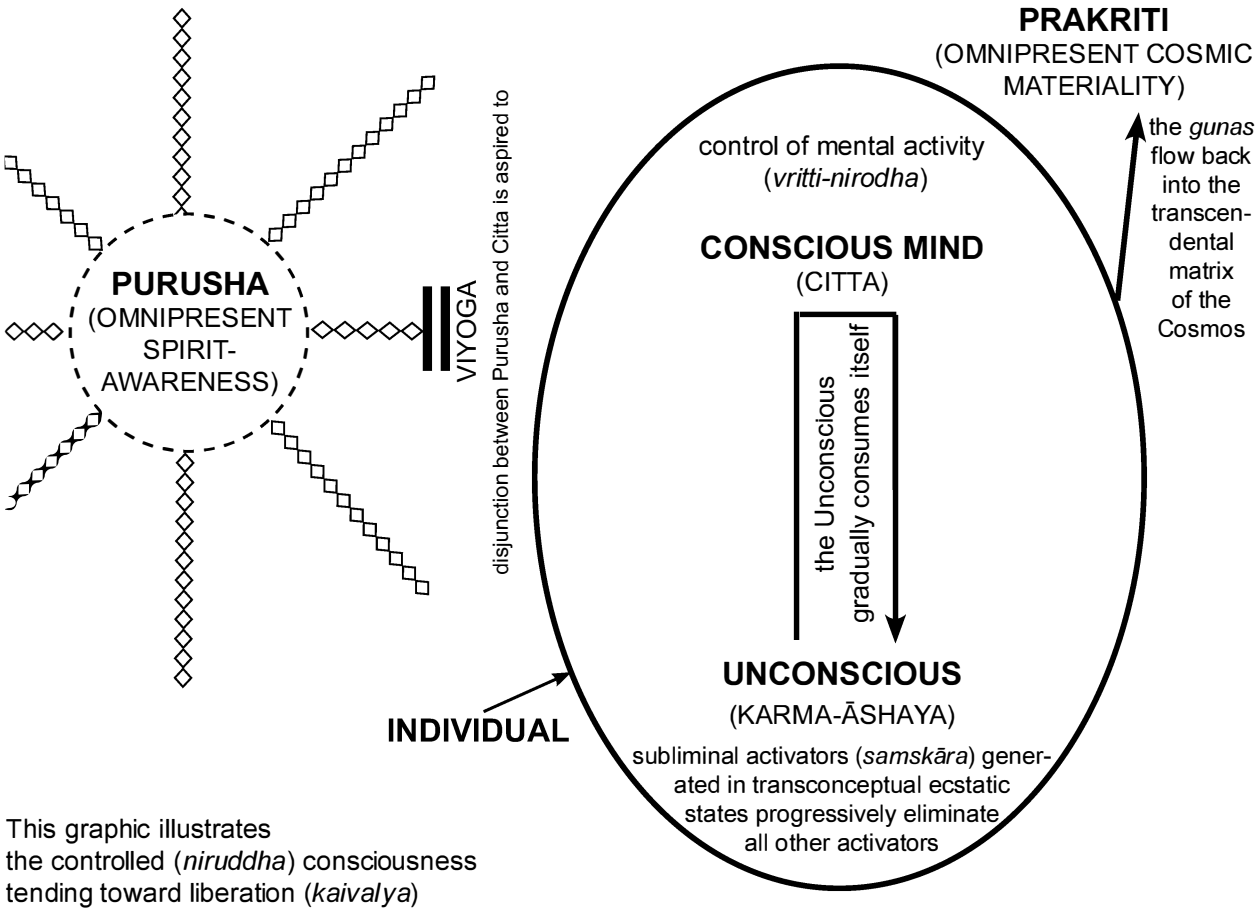
Meditation (*dhyāna*) has an important function—namely to eliminate the fluctuations (*vritti*)—but this touches only the surface of the mind. As discussed in conjunction with aphorism 1.6, the five kinds of fluctuation are valid cognition, misconception, conceptualization, sleep, and memory. As meditation deepens, we are able to progressively disable these fluctuations. Memory (*smriti*), which reaches deep into the unconscious level of the mind, is the most difficult to control. Through meditation we are able to at least neutralize its thought-producing force. A deeper level of memory is accessed through the practice of ecstasy (*samādhi*), which, in aphorism 3.3, is said to be "empty" of the mind's typical behavior, which is to present itself split into consciousness and the object of consciousness. In *samādhi,* the practitioner merges with the object of contemplation *as it were* (*iva*). We can understand this as a further neutralization of memory.

Then, as the ecstatic state deepens and cognitive ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) turns into supracognitive ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), the practitioner is engaging the advanced process of reducing all subliminal deposits in the depth of the mind (or memory) to rubble. The successful elimination of the unconscious is known as "seedless ecstasy" (*nirbīja-samādhi*).

It is at this point that the psychocosmic factors, the *gunas,* themselves are released from the immediate "field" of the individual and returned to the transcendental core of the Cosmos (*prakriti-pradhāna*). This process of dissolution bears the technical designation of *guna-prasava*. All of this will be discussed in upcoming lessons.



This graphic illustrates
the emergent (*vyutthāna*) consciousness



This graphic illustrates the controlled (*niruddha*) consciousness tending toward liberation (*kaivalya*)

When we look at the yogic process, we can discern the following five phases:

1. Harmonization of social relationships through moral discipline (*yama*), which reduces the creation of negative karma.
2. Harmonization of the mind through self-restraint (*niyama*), which generates positive (or nonafflicted, *aklishta*) mental states, while minimizing negative (or afflicted, *klishta*) mental states.
3. Deepening of mastery of the mind through posture, breath control, sensory inhibition, concentration, meditation, and ecstasy.
4. Perfecting mental control by means of the higher stages of the ecstatic process, notably transconceptual ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*).
5. Conversion of the Unconscious leading to "seedless ecstasy" (*nirbīja-samādhi*) followed by liberation via the dissolution of the *gunas* that previously maintained the individual's body and mind.

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL AND LOKA-SAMGRAHA

loka-samgraha

It is obvious from Patanjali's inclusion of the practice of the Four Immeasurables in his repertoire of meditation techniques that he believed in the culivation of positive emotions and sentiments for the benefit of other beings. Although he emphasises control (*nirodha*) as part of the direct route to liberation that he recommends in his *Sūtra,* his approach is not self-centered. The Yoga practitioner is expected to do his or her utmost to attain liberation, but *not* at the expense of other beings. In this regard, his or her orientation is comparable to the path of the *arhat* (or *arhant*) of Hīnayāna Buddhism, as we can glean it from the *Suttas* written in Pali.

The *arhat,* or "worthy one," is a devoted follower of the Buddha, who, by diligently applying the Buddha's teaching (*dharma*), has succeeded in conquering his passions, though he is not yet permanently established in *nirvāna.* The *arhat* possesses a selfless mind, but does not see it as his mission to either teach the path (as does a *buddha*) or transform the world into a delightful paradise (as is the aspiration of some political visionaries). Whatever good he does in the world results naturally from his innate goodness, or virtuous character.

The transcendental bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

The followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism, who became a powerful voice within the developing Buddhist community about 100 A.D., see the *arhat's* self-containment as a flaw. They favor the ideal of the *bodhisattva,* who is deeply committed to the spiritual upliftment of *all* sentient beings. He or she aspires to liberation not for selfish reasons (which would be futile in any case), but with the purpose of attaining a superior capacity to help all others to attain the same state of spiritual freedom.

Thus, from the outset of the *bodhisattva* path, the practitioner trains himself or herself in the great virtues of compassion, kindness, generosity, patience, and so forth, thereby becoming a positive moral and spiritual source. In other words, even while aspiring toward liberation, the *bodhisattva* becomes a benign influence upon others, and as his or her virtuous character grows, this influence will also grow. In this way, both the path and the final state of liberation serve not only the practitioner but all others as well.

It has often been claimed that Hinduism does not have a corresponding sociospiritual ideal and that practitioners of Hindu spirituality, similar to the Buddhist *arhat,* pay more attention to their own salvation than the weal of others. This claim, however, is not entirely true. For, already the *Bhagavad-Gītā* champions

the ideal of *loka-samgraha* or "bringing together of the world." Unfortunately, this scripture does not tell us exactly what *loka-samgraha* stands for or is practiced, but we can make some sensible deductions from the *Gītā's* teachings as a whole.

Krishna

Clearly, the God-man Krishna taught a more integral type of Yoga, which involves the *yogin's* emotional and social nature. His activist gospel stands in sharp contrast to the often world-denying, ascetical orientation within the ramifying tradition of Yoga. The ideal *yogin* or *yoginī* does not withdraw into the forest or mountain, but lives a socially engaged life here and now. Krishna favored renunciation *in* action rather than renunciation *of* action. Imagine a world of self-actualization and self-realizing men and women! Their combined presence, sustained by both contemplation and right action, would unquestionably create a benign society in which each of the four basic goals of traditional Hindu society—material welfare (*artha*), aesthetic pursuit (*kāma*), moral integrity (*dharma*), and spiritual liberation (*moksha*)—would be cultivated appropriately. Naturally, such a healthy society would be internally cohesive and robust. This spiritually based cohesiveness would entail tolerance, openness, integration, and inclusiveness, which is the ideal captured in the notion of *loka-samgraha.* The word *loka* means "world," and *samgraha* can easily be interpreted to stand for "cohesion."

LOKA-SAMGRAHA AND DHARMA

A stably cohesive society is necessarily a society in which virtue (*dharma*), or the moral sense, is considered central. Judging from what we know of history, such a society has yet to emerge. Some small-scale societies, perhaps, have approached this grand ideal, but it appears that whenever a society grows beyond the level of a band or tribe, it tends toward disharmony and disintegration. Nevertheless, as a desirable ideal, *loka-samgraha* expresses one of humanity's finest insights and aspirations. In our own era, unfortunately, our creative cultural élite is slow to embrace great moral ideals of this kind. And yet, clearly, our modern society is in dire need of them, not least because the lack of a wisdom-based morality has brought us to the brink of self-destruction.

The devastation of our environment, caused by unbridled greed, hedonism, and carelessness, has assumed such vast proportions that we are now beginning to reap the karmic seeds sown over several generations. While politicians and economists favor the idea of "one world," they do so for the wrong reasons: A homogenized world is easier to control and market to.

True world integration, however, is impossible in the absence of shared moral values that are sound, life-enhancing, and ultimately liberating.

FAITH, BELIEF, AND KNOWLEDGE

In our modern culture, we are inclined to place a premium on knowledge, dismiss belief, and feel consternated about faith. This attitude, which represents a reversal of the traditional orientation, ties in with our emotional poverty, that is, our awkward and distrustful relationship to the realm of emotions. Although we downplay emotions, we are still very much subject to them and, what is more, are particularly susceptible to their negative manifestations. Even the popular assumption that "knowledge is power," which epitomizes our obsession with information ("data"), entails a sinister element: the idea that power is inevitably desirable. History, however, teaches us a different lesson, which is captured in the British historian Lord Acton's aphorism "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Written in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, 1887.)

The corruption that occurs when power rules supreme is one of moral and spiritual rot. As C. G. Jung recognized: "Where love rules, there is no will to power; and where power predominates, there love is lacking. The one is the shadow of the other." As modern science and technology has amply demonstrated, knowledge, when not tempered by wisdom or moral rectitude, can be put to evil use, as in the huge war machinery that continues to loom large as a threat to human survival.

At the same time, belief also can lead to corruption. As the American philosopher Eric Hoffer put it: "Absolute faith corrupts as absolutely as absolute power" (*Reflections on the Human Condition,* 1973). But "absolute faith" here is really "absolute belief," and one must carefully hold faith and belief apart, which Hoffer obviously did not do. Belief is the counterpoint to knowledge, whereas faith is an altogether different modality.

Philosophers are still arguing over how knowledge is best defined. Most thinkers would agree, however, that knowledge must be true to fact and justified. Some would add to this that knowledge must also be believable, and this third criterion makes it obvious that knowledge is not such a clear-cut mode of knowing as most scientists, for instance, assume. Every system of knowledge contains a great many "ifs" and "buts" and are not entirely rational but dependent on all kinds of premises or assumptions that merge into beliefs.

Faith, again, is not identical with belief. To understand faith correctly, in the yogic sense, we must move away from the conceptual dichotomy between knowledge and belief, where the latter is explained as an understanding that does not completely or at all derive from rational thought or empirical fact. Thus, the notion that there is intelligent life on other planets is a belief for which there is poor to no evidence as yet. The belief in a Creator-God is backed only by theological speculations. The belief in yetis has some slight evidence. And so forth. Some people share these various beliefs, while others do not. Knowledge has a greater degree of shared public certainty, though we have learned that even knowledge, or what people think is knowledge, can undergo change.

Faith, by contrast, is not about whether something is true or not, or whether it is known or be-

Rather, faith is about a person's innermost being. As the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich expressed it:

> Faith is not a theoretical affirmation of something uncertain, it is the existential acceptance of something transcending ordinary experience. Faith is not an opinion but a state. It is the state of being grasped by the power of being, which transcends everything that is and in which everything that is participates. he who is grasped by this power is able to affirm himself because he knows that he is affirmed by the power of being-itself. (*The Courage To Be,* p. 173).

shraddhā

vijnāna

vishvāsa

In case you were wondering, the Sanskrit terms for faith, knowledge, and belief are respectively *shraddhā, vijnāna,* and *vishvāsa.* Interestingly, the terms for knowledge and belief both have the prefix *vi-,* which corresponds to the Latin *dis-* and suggests a mental state of diffusion, dispersion, or separation. *Shraddhā* is derived from the verbal root *shrat* "to trust" together with *dhā,* conveying the idea of "standing firm." We could say that faith is one's standing firm in the deepest or highest part of one's being, which then issues forth as the courage to engage life authentically.

Clearly, a person of such fundamental faith fears neither thought nor emotion, or feeling. He or she will especially not be afraid to face his or her own shadow (in the Jungian sense), that is, the Unconscious. In yogic terms, a person of faith does not hesitate to embrace the sacred ordeal of ego-transcending transformation, which lies at the heart of the process of Yoga.

The opposite of faith is doubt (*samshaya*), or existential uncertainty, which saps one's vitality (*vīrya*), and is, as was made clear in Lesson 6, a major obstacle on the yogic path. Many people choose to live in a state of doubt rather than faith, and consequently they also opt for suffering (*duhkha*). Faith, like contentment or joy, is a positive state, which characterizes our whole being. In fact, faith is marked by contentment and joy, as well as a fundamental fearlessness about life.

A side effect of faith is that one does not anxiously cling to the certainties of knowledge, which are not always so certain after all, and that one also does not, in the absence of knowledge, have to neurotically build a cathedral of beliefs, which are on closer examination questionable or altogether nonsensical. Faith gives one great inner strength, which allows one to cultivate openness and tolerance.

◘ Now read Essay #62 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

Doubt is the business of science, and the scientist believes in the virtue of doubt. Faith is a wholly different virtue, which transcends both the doubting mind and the believing heart.

EMOTIONS AND HEALING

In Buddhism, the Buddha is considered as the supreme healer, and enlightenment itself is regarded as the ultimate cure of the ills of conditioned existence. Yoga, whether Buddhist or Hindu, is the remedy. Thus, spiritual wholeness equates with true health.

A growing number of physicians are re-learning an ancient truth, which is that ill health has primarily psychospiritual causes. It is a failure to adjust to reality at whatever level. Conversely, healing occurs when the inner (attitudinal, emotional) maladaptation has been corrected. Hence Yoga—or any other similar spiritual discipline—is the shortest way to physical and mental health.

In 1978, the German oncologist Ryke Geerd Hamer, who pioneered a new psychosomatic approach to cancer, witnessed his son die of a gunshot wound from an accidental shooting. Three years later, he developed cancer, and his wife, also a physician, died of grief not long after. Trying to understand his own disease, he launched on an intensive research program involving thousands of cancer patients. He learned that in every case the disease was precipitated by what he calls a "biological conflict"—a trauma that registers simultaneously in the psyche, the brain, and a specific organ. When brain scanners became more widely available in the 1980s, the involvement of the brain in the creation of physical diseases was amply demonstrated. Persecuted by the German and French medical systems, which are notorious for their doctrinaire ideology, Hamer (born in 1935) was given a three-year prison sentence by the French judicial system and was released unconditionally in 2006 upon appeal. His persecution by the authorities and incarceration had the opposite effect to the one intended by the authorities: Rather than squashing the alternative medical movement, it greatly boosted its momentum.

Here I am mainly interested in the pathogenic role of the emotions: As Hamer and others have shown, what we feel matters decisively. This is also the basis for homeopathy and psychospiritual healing modalities. In his book *Biogenealogy: Decoding the Psychic Roots of Illness,* the French therapist Patrick Obissier circumscribes "biological conflict" as "a violent inner tension, a veritable internal hurricane," which causes a somatization of the problem, that is, illness.

For instance, it is now thought that cancer of the mammary glands is caused by an emotional conflict over the nesting instinct, while a feeling of worthlessness might become somatized in boneloss or the need for emotional protection might lead to melanomas or warts. The relationship between emotions and physical illnesses, of course, is not one on one, and past traumas in one's family line apparently are a significant factor in how an emotional trauma is negotiated by the body.

In light of this, it is easy to see how by healing one's emotional traumas, a reversal of its physical manifestation can be accomplished, which explains those incidences of spontaneous remissions or "miracle cures" that mainstream medicine finds so puzzling. Thus, Patanjali's theory of the causes-of-affliction (*kle*

sha) has a very practical relevance. It is a tool for understanding the process by which we keep ourselves locked into the repeat experience of suffering and also by which we can exit the endless round of births and deaths. Our reactions to the karmically conditioned experiences of life are uniquely our own, of course, but they all can be understood within the *klesha* framework. As Patanjali sees it, our reactions are all anchored in ignorance, that is, in the Unconscious. We either move toward or away from objects, people, or situations depending on whether we find them pleasurable or otherwise. This is the *rāga/dvesha* automatism. We also are attached to life itself (via the survival instinct), and we take all experiences personally to one degree or another, which is to say, our reactions issue from the sense of "I am."

Whatever emotions we might experience, all have this "I" for its center and also reinforce it. In the absence of enlightenment in which our true nature is revealed, all our reactions to life also automatically perpetuate our spiritual ignorance, that is, the Unconscious—unless we have embarked on a course of conscious spiritual transformation. It is then that are able to think, emote, and experience life differently, namely from an ego-transcending perspective. Thus, our yogic orientation can be considered as gradually transplanting afflicted (*klishta*) with nonafflicted (*aklishta*) states of mind, which creates a karmically positive inner environment promotive of liberation. A large part of training the mind is to neutralize negative emotions and cultivate their positive counterparts. No one has yet fallen ill of genuine love, kindness, compassion, patience, or generosity!

None of this, however, is possible without astute self-knowledge. We all have experienced traumas in life—not least the trauma of being born—and we all tend to react to them with forgetfulness. Yet, in order to heal ourselves emotionally (perhaps the first step to spiritual healing in the form of enlightenment), we must first identify the wounds delivered to us by life itself. Illness is always a great opportunity to inspect ourselves and to make significant changes based on what we could excavate from our own psyche. To engage the challenging work of self-inspection, we must naturally be willing to heal.

THE BLESSING OF ILLNESS

Thanks to illness, individuals can gain awareness of all the plans contained in their genes and then discover the extent of their powers to adapt. Thanks to illness, individuals gain access to the trials and ordeals experienced by all their ancestors, both near and remote.

Without this privileged moment, in which the genes give expression to something completely different than what they normally express, individuals have no awareness of their [family] line and what it has experienced, and thus grow isolated from it.

—Patrick Obissier, *Biogenealogy,* p. 168

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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FAITH ACCORDING TO KRISHNA (BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ)

The faith of every [being] is in accordance with his essence (*sattva*), O son-of-Bharata. This person is of the form of faith. Whatever his faith is, that, verily, is he. (17.3)

The man-of-faith (*shraddhāvān*), intent on That, with senses restrained, wins knowledge. Having gained knowledge, he will quickly attain supreme peace. (4.39)

He who is ignorant and devoid of faith and of doubting nature (*samshaya-ātman*) will perish. Neither this world nor the next, nor happiness are for him who is of doubting nature . (4.40)

Hence severing with the sword of knowledge this doubt lodged in your heart, [which] springs from ignorance, arise! Resort to Yoga, O son-of-Bharata! (4.42)

Suggested Yoga Practice

EMOTIONS REVIEW AND THE FOUR BRAHMA-VIHĀRAS

brahma-vihāra

It is obvious that we cannot grow spiritually without carefully examining the emotional blocks in our psyche. Several well-known Western teachers of Eastern wisdom traditions have publicly admitted that, after years and years of dedicated spiritual practice, they finally had to admit to themselves that their progress on the path had been marred by the emotional wounds resident in their psyche. They sought help from psychotherapy, and once they had worked through the big emotional traumas in their life, they found their spiritual efforts bearing new fruit.

This exercise comes in two phases. The first phase consists in identifying your major emotional blocks preventing you either from making a whole-hearted commitment to the spiritual path or from becoming more deeply transformed by the spiritual values, attitudes, and practices you have adopted.

The second phase consists in practicing the Four Immeasurables, as the "Brahmic Dwellings" are also called, as a direct means of overcoming existing emotional blocks by benefiting others, especially those you feel problematic toward.

Admittedly, this is a VERY challenging exercise, which, if done rightly, is bound to be somewhat disturbing to you and likely to meet with inner resistance. Therefore, if you are currently under great stress or being treated for depression or some other emotion-based psychological problem, I strongly recommend that you consult your physician or therapist before embarking on the first phase of this exercise. I believe, though, that the second phase—the meditation of the Four Immeasurables—is safe for everyone. If, however, you should experience significantly disturbing emotions while practicing the Four Immeasurables, it would be best to resort for now to the corpse posture (*shava-āsana*), as described in Lesson 1.

PHASE 1 (Emotions Review): The purpose of this phase is to identify your *presently* most evident emotional blocks—the kind of emotionally disturbing issues that your mind tends to revisit over and

> **These four [*brahma-vihāras*] seem so simple as to be banal. In reality they are subtle and deep.**
>
> —B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Life,* p. 95

Mirror, mirror on the wall. . .

over again. For instance, you might have had a very unpleasant experience at work, which has left you feeling wounded (misunderstood, unjustly accused, belittled, unappreciated, etc.). Perhaps your boss belittled you, or a coworker treated you badly. Or you might have had an argument with your partner, or an upsetting scene with another family member or neighbor, which you tend to mull over. If you have not had such an experience recently, you would undoubtedly find one going farther back into your past. Or you could focus on a more chronic emotional issue, perhaps, such as timidness to speak up when facing an authority figure; reluctance to express your inner feelings; difficulty with asking others for help; resentment about other people's success; feeling unloved, guilty, or ashamed, or the need to console yourself with food or television, and so forth. You know best what ails you!

Wall plaque depicting in graphic form the Four Immeasurables, found at the Buddhist Vihara in Wolverhampton, England, which was opened in 1991.

Pick just one recurring issue at a time. If you are not already clear about why you feel the way you do, then set aside a block of time to really delve into this matter and analyze it to the best of your ability. Ask yourself, for instance, what is most likely to trigger this emotional pattern? Is it obvious to others? How long does the emotion last once it is triggered? How do you tend to manage it? In other words, do you have a strategy for diffusing the negative emotion when it arises? Or do you tend to stuff it down and avoid talking about it?

If you find it difficult to silently think about all this, you should feel free to talk to yourself out loud. When you have achieved a certain degree of clarity, proceed to Phase 2, but, unless you have worked through some of your "stuff" in therapy, please give your self-examination sufficient time. Focus on how you feel and behave rather than historical circumstances and external causes. This exercise is about you, not others or the world at large!

You may focus on the same issue over several sessions, until you feel an inner change.

Engage this exercise only once per day twice a week over a three-week period. Without proper guidance, you may find that engaging this kind of self-inquiry more intensively might send you into a tailspin. It is best to proceed slowly and in a quiet, peaceful setting.

PHASE 2 (Four Immeasurables): Personalize your emotional issue. That is to say, make it as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying "I have a problem with jealousy," say "I feel jealous about so-and-so because of such-and-such." Admit to yourself that whatever the cause of your emotional upset and regardless of the circumstances or the guilt of others, you are always responsible for your own emotions. In short, **don't blame others for how you feel!** Your suffering is your own. Instead, resolve to

mental attitude by practicing the Four Immeasurables as follows:

1. Sit in an easeful posture or in a comfortable chair, which allows you to hold your spine erect.
2. Close your eyes or keep them half open (if your mind does not get too distracted by your visual environment), gazing a few feet in front of you.
3. Relax your whole body, center yourself inwardly, and cultivate a positive frame of mind.
4. Recall and succinctly formulate the particular emotional issue that you wish to overcome. Put your intention in the first person: "I wish to overcome the anger I feel toward so-and-so. — I realize that anger is a destructive emotion, which harms me and others, and therefore I strongly desire to release my anger now and always."
5. Inhale and exhale slowly and as mindfully as possible for 2–3 minutes.
6. Recall experiences in which felt love or kindness toward another person, or in which you were the recipient of them. Recapture how this felt.
7. Now visualize the person or group of people toward whom you feel a negative emotion and come to an appreciation that that person or group, like you, desires loving kindness, even if he/she/they have themselves been a source of unlove and unkindness.
8. Feeling as strongly as possible the sentiment of loving-kindness in your whole body, radiate this positive feeling in all directions, as if light was emitted from your very cells. In particular, shower that person or group of people with the feeling of loving-kindness. Do this for a few minutes, or for as long as your mind stays strong and positive.

THE ADMONITION OF RAHULA

According to the *Mahā-Rahulo-Vāda-Sutta* (found in the *Majjhīma-Nikāya* 62 [=7.2] of the *Sutta-Pitaka*), the Buddha instructed his son Rahula as follows:

> Rahulo, practice loving kindness to overcome anger.
> Rahulo, practice compassion to overcome cruelty.
> Rahulo, practice sympathetic joy to overcome hatred.
> Rahulo, practice equanimity to overcome prejudice.

9. Now sit still for a couple of minutes while observing your breath slowly moving in and out of your body.
10. Next generate as strongly as possible the sentiment of compassion and then radiate this positive feeling in all directions, again focusing on that person or group of people with whom you are in conflict.
11. Again sit still for a couple of minutes while observing your breath.
12. Now generate the feeling of sympathetic joy and then radiate this sentiment in all directions, as before.
13. Return to the practice of observing the breath for a couple of minutes.
14. Generate the mood of deep equanimity and then radiate that feeling in all directions, as before.
15. For the last time, sit still and observe your breath.
16. Before concluding this exercise, dedicate the merit gained from this practice to the well-being and liberation of all.

If you are not entirely clear on the distinction between the four "immeasurable" sentiments, you could merge them all into the single sentiment of positive regard for all beings and the deep wish that they might overcome suffering and realize lasting joy.

This profound exercise not only will make your own mind peaceful by clearing out lingering anger and resentment but also genuinely help others. There is of course no need to tell them of your spiritual work; just observe how your dissipating negative emotions coincide with desirable changes in the external world and particularly your problematic relationships. I actually had someone write me a conciliatory letter after having included that person in a similar visualization practice for many years—40 years later!

REVERENCE FOR LIFE

Two observations have cast their shadows over my life. One is the realization that the world is inexplicably mysterious and full of suffering, the other that I have been born in a period of spiritual decline for mankind.

I myself found the basis and the direction for my life at the moment I discovered the principle of Reverence for Life, which contains life's ethical affirmation. I therefore want to work in this world to help people to think more deeply and more independently.

—Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), p. 223.

For Reflection

The "For Reflection" questions of this Lesson are more extensive than in the other Lessons in order to encourage you to apply what you have learned about emotions to your own situation and thus directly assist your spiritual growth. Overcoming negative emotions is a prerequisite of inner development.

1. Are emotions important or would we be better off without them? How, if at all, do they contribute to our life and to human civilization at large? Would the arts be possible without emotion on the part of the artist and the art appreciator?

2. What role have they played in your own life? Would you say that you have mastered your emotions or are they, to whatever degree, mastering you?

3. Is communication between people facilitated or handicapped by emotions? Are only negative emotions a stumbling block or, perhaps, even so-called positive emotions can get in the way of understanding one another? Which, if any, emotion is truly worth cultivating, and why?

4. If you could change a past event in which a negative emotion (either on your or someone else's part) played a key role, which one would it be? And how would you handle it differently from an emotional point of view?

5. How do you feel about people who have little or no control over their emotions, such as murderers committing crimes of passion? How strong are your emotions toward them? Can you put yourself in their place, or do you find this impossible? Are there any emotions that you absolutely disdain? Do you disown or downplay any of your own emotions?

6. Do you find it hard to express or own up to having certain negative emotions, such as fear, distrust, envy, disgust, etc. Or do you find positive emotions like joy and love awkward to express or difficult to accept? Can you be emotionally expressive with children but not adults, or vice versa? What, if anything, in your past makes it challenging for you to express or accept such emotions and what would it take for you to overcome this imprint in your mind? Do you even consider it a worthwhile task for a person to rid himself or herself of negative engrams in the brain? Or do you believe that this sort of thing will clear up in due course or should be left alone? Do you think that that tinkering with the remnants of the past is a risky undertaking ("opening a can of worms")? Is it still possible to live a constructive and decent life even with such imprints left in place?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

7. It is thought natural to feel emotions like shame and guilt, but when these are generalized and lingering they are deemed self-destructive. Do you agree with this view? Or do you think it is appropriate for a person to have such feelings to a debilitating degree long after the event that caused them? For instance, should a drunk driver who accidentally killed someone be plagued by debilitating guilt for the rest of his or her life?

8. Do you think that it is possible for a human being to be *completely* free of anger and only feel positive regard for everyone? In other words, do you believe humanity could spawn true saints? Or is this merely a pipe dream? Do you think that some anger is necessary to even live in this world?

9. Do you think love "makes the world go round" or that it is "overrated"? Do you believe that people generally confuse love with romantic love or even sexual desire? Is selfless love ever possible or do we only come close to it but never truly attain it? In your opinion, is there any emotion that is absolutely free of self-interest?

10. Do you consider the path of the *bodhisattva* possible or can it never be more than good intention? In other words, can anyone ever attain to a truly virtuous life? This question is pertinent, because the virtues all imply a disciplining of emotions.

11. How, if at all, are impatience and anger related? Is it possible for an angry person to be patient? How do anger and impatience figure in your own life? Have you experienced negative side effects from being angry or impatient? What kind of people or situations make you angry or impatient? How does your reactivity relate to your expectations?

12. Do you tend to be more sympathetic toward a grieving person than someone who is depressed either because he or she feels worthless, abandoned, or for another similar reason? Are you likely to feel more sympathetic toward someone who is depressed on account of a life experience or because he or she has a genetic liability to suffer from depression? How do you feel about depressed individuals who have an alcohol or drug problem versus those who are neither alcoholics nor drug takers? In other words, what triggers your sympathy and what doesn't?

13. Have you noticed how emotions can flip to their exact opposites—from love to hate, from envy to pity, and so on? How is this possible? Some emotions, like jealousy and anger, seem to go in tandem? Why? Can you think of any examples from your own life?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

14. How would an emotionally mature individual behave under normal circumstances and in moments of great duress? You might want to answer this question by recalling an individual you admire greatly for his or her emotional integrity.

15. Do you believe that corporal punishment for children is appropriate? Should parents freely express their anger toward children whose behavior was hurtful and unacceptable or should parents be more self-controlled? Some parents would argue that unless they show their raw feelings, their children would never learn.

16. What role do parents play in the transmission of positive or negative emotions? In other words, do children "inherit" the emotions of their parents via the process of socialization? Do you think it it is possible that emotions may be inherited? If so, some people might wonder how an individual can even be held responsible for the "sins of the fathers"? Or is the source of one's emotions (whether inherited or not) utterly indifferent to what a person must do relative to them?

17. Are we inevitably responsible for the outcome of all our emotions? Assuming, for instance, a driver backs into your car as you drive past slowly, inflicting whiplash on you. He clearly and indisputably is at fault. He then steps out of his car and angrily yells at you, accusing you of having caused the accident. Feeling a bit dazed and upset, you make an angry (but to the point) retort. Next you know the other driver starts madly kicking your car. Are you responsible for aggravating the situation? Could one even argue that you increased the other driver's suffering by your retort? To give another example: You are wrongly accused of doing damage to expensive equipment, which will cost your company a good many dollars to replace. Your boss is rather upset and angrily confronts you. Instead of letting the situation get the better of you, you decide to behave like a *yogi* or *yoginī*. You rightly deny responsibility for the damage but refuse to get emotional and calmly respond to your boss's accusations. (Maybe you act just a bit too self-assured.) She thinks you are lying and insubordinate and gets even more angry. In other words, you were trying to do the right thing but only managed to aggravate the situation. In what sense could your own emotions (or the lack thereof) be held responsible for causing your boss greater emotional distress, or would you say that this was entirely her problem and had nothing to do with you? In considering all this, you might want to bear in mind that yogically speaking karma is the boomerang effect we cause by our behavior (in body, speech, and mind).

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

18. The present-day justice system of virtually all countries in the world is based on punishment rather than rehabilitation. Would you agree with those who think that this is an expression of a primitive emotionality ("an eye for an eye")? Or do you feel that crime must be punished and that it is alright to invest billions of dollars in incarcerating rather than rehabilitating criminals? Or should governments try to achieve both goals? In your consideration, don't forget that in the United States, for instance, there is clearly a racial prejudice at work in the judicial system, which has led to an overwhelming number of non-whites to be incarcerated. Do you think that, perhaps, only violent criminals who are clearly a threat to society should be incarcerated, while other offenders should be given milder sentences and be required to make restitution for their crimes by doing community service, followed by professional help with reintegrating into the larger society?

19. What are your thoughts on capital punishment? Do you believe it acts as a deterrent and therefore is justifiable or do you think it is a barbaric custom that violates the virtues of forgiveness and love and therefore should be abolished? Would it not be more benevolent to convert death sentences to sentences of life imprisonment without parole and to afford the tortured minds of hardened criminals every conceivable psychiatric help?

20. How do you think and feel about war, which is institutionalized aggression (anger)? Would you agree with the view that war is an outmoded reaction involving primitive emotions, such as fear and greed? Is pacifism a viable alternative or is it merely a false utopianism based on a wrong appraisal of human nature? Is war endemic to our human species or can you envision a time when there are no more wars and peace reigns throughout the world?

Please give the "For Reflection" questions—especially of this Lesson—your undivided attention. You will find that they probe deeply into your Unconscious, providing you really dedicate some time to answering them. They may even trigger more questions in you.

QUESTIONNAIRE 12

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. Which of the following is the odd one out? ***(Check one)***

(a) *bhaya*
(b) *hasa*
(c) *krodha*
(d) *shringāra*
(e) *vismaya*

2. According to Abhinava Gupta, which of the following is the cause of the mood of peace? ***(Check one)***

(a) love
(b) compassion
(c) patience
(d) virtue

3. What is the commitment of a *bodhisattva? (Check one)*

(a) to serve all beings
(b) to serve all beings and postpone his or her own struggle for liberation
(c) to attain *nirvāna* in the present lifetime
(d) to attain *nirvāna* so that he or she can serve others better

4. According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* serenity specifically results from which of the following virtues? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) overcoming jealousy
(b) overcoming aversion
(c) overcoming resentment
(d) overcoming attraction
(e) patience
(f) compassion
(g) love

5. Which of the following emotions can be said to be a manifestation primarily of *rajas*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) wonder
(b) fear
(c) resentment
(d) anger
(e) regret

6. Which of the following emotions can be said to be a manifestation primarily of *tamas*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) envy
(b) jealousy
(c) fear
(d) shame
(e) grief

7. Which of the following terms does Patanjali use to convey the concept of the Unconscious? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *karma*
(b) *karma-āshaya*
(c) *samskāra*
(d) *vritti*
(e) *vāsanā*
(f) *shraddhā*

8. What role does discernment (*viveka*) play in mastering one's emotions? *(Write four or more sentences)*

9. What are two important differences between Patanjali's concept of the Unconscious and its counterpart in modern psychology? *(Write four or more sentences)*

10. If negative emotions are an obstacle on the yogic path, what role does the cultivation of positive emotions play and how do the latter relate to the fact that Yoga expects its practitioners to overcome both "black" and "white" karma? *(Write five or more sentences)*

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 13
The Shadow Realm

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To discover Yoga's notion of a subtle realm of existence inhabited by discarnate spirits and to learn about the paranormal aspects of the yogic work*

- Are There Subtle Worlds and Invisible Beings?
- Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet
- The Science of Parapsychology
- Going Beyond the Ordinary Senses
- Yoga Cosmology
- Beings on the Lower Subtle Plane
- Paranormal Abilities According to Patanjali
- Perfected Adepts
- Siddha Patanjali
- Levitating Yogin
- Control Over the Senses
- The Five Sources of Paranormal Attainments
- You Can Do Telekinesis
- The Eight Great Paranormal Powers of an Adept
- The Four States of Consciousness
- Lucid Dreaming
- Further Reading
- The Sign of Siddhahood
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Yoga-Nidrā
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 13

ARE THERE SUBTLE WORLDS AND INVISIBLE BEINGS?

Unless one has closed one's mind to all things immaterial and taken a doctrinaire viewpoint that favors a purely materialistic interpretation of reality, one cannot fail to wonder at least occasionally about such phenomena as clairvoyance, prophetic dreams, telepathy, and, yes, so-called ghosts. All religions tell us that there is an invisible, hidden realm that is occupied by "things that go bump in the night." Mainstream science dismisses such notions as fantasies or "myths," which are best dumped along with religion and mythology.

Yet, remarkably, after 200 years of scientific "progress," materialistic philosophy has not emerged triumphant. On the contrary, within the scientific enterprise itself, dissonant voices have arisen that call the very premises of materialism into question. Ever since Max Planck, Niels Bohr, and Albert Einstein, physics has been forced to accommodate the nonmaterialistic theories of quantum mechanics. Medicine, a bastion of philosophical materialism, has had to make room for any number of "complementary" or "alternative" approaches and healing modalities that favor a nonmaterialistic viewpoint, such as psychosomatic medicine, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, dream therapy, chiropractic, osteopathy, acupuncture, homeopathy, herbalism, psychospiritual healing, distance healing (including prayer), and a host of others.

As for psychology, it reluctantly but undeniably birthed the sub-discipline of parapsychology in the 1920s, starting with Joseph B. Rhine's statistically verified extrasensory perception (ESP) experiments at Duke University. Rhine founded *The Journal of Parapsychology* in 1937 and the Parapsychological Association in 1957. Parapsychological research received a boost from the U.S. government's interest in what is called "remote viewing" (clairvoyance) in the 1970s and 1980s. The various government projects involving the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency were primarily designed to gather additional military intelligence on specific "targets." In 1988, this program was apparently axed when a new administration came into power in Washington, after which the hitherto sop secret remote viewing "technology" was ushered into the private sector.

The irrational fullness of life has taught me never to discard anything, even when it goes against all our theories (so short-lived at best) or otherwise admits of no immediate explanation. It is of course disquieting, and one is not certain whether the compass is pointing true or not; but security, certitude, and peace do not lead to discoveries.

—C. G. Jung, from the foreword to Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

Thus, it has become legitimate again to ask about the invisible realm and its possible population: Do subtle worlds and invisible beings exist? The answer of Yoga is of course a resounding YES! Perhaps you have had your own encounter with the subtle dimension, or you have heard others tell anecdotes about their paranormal experiences. A 1991 Gallup poll found that twelve million Americans have had near-death experiences, which they took as confirmation for life after death. According to a poll reported in *Scientific American* in 1999, c. 90% of Americans believe in a personal God and life after death.

In the eighteenth century, in the evening of his highly accomplished life, the Swedish scientist, inventor, and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg made the headlines with his vivid descriptions of both heavenly and hellish realms based on his own visionary experiences. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the fad of Mesmerism (founded by the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer, who popularized the technique of hypnosis) and the movement of Spiritism (invented by the French scientist Allan Kardec). In the nineteenth century to early twentieth century, the religious movement of Spiritualism made séances ("Mediumism") a popular pastime. In 1875, the Theosophical Society was founded, which greatly facilitated the dissemination of Eastern wisdom traditions and their parapsychological lore in the Western hemisphere. Along with Occultism and Neopaganism, these diverse movements continued to be a popular force in the twentieth century, which gave rise to New Ageism.

While these alternative routes to mainstream science and religion contain much that is mere humbug fostering delusional ideas, they also have served the important purpose of keeping the door to the paranormal world open for anyone wanting to investigate it. Perhaps it is not surprising that, according to a Harris poll conducted in 2003, 31 percent of the American public should believe in astrology and 27 percent in reincarnation.

As far as other planes of existence is concerned, the same poll showed that 84 percent of Americans believe in the survival of the soul after death, 82 percent in the existence of heaven, 69 percent in the existence of hell, and 51 percent in the existence of ghosts (despite the popular 1984 *Ghost Busters* movie!). The pollsters did not explain where the 2 percent of souls go who do not end up in heaven or hell. It is hard

EDGAR CAYCE: THE SLEEPING PROPHET

The celebrated American psychic Edgar Cayce (March 18, 1877–January 3, 1945), who only had an eighth-grade education, did 14,000 "readings" over a 43-year periodd while in a state of trance, which included accurate and at times sophisticated diagnoses of his clients' medical condition and prescriptions for their cure. In 1923, to his own consternation, while in trance he started to talk about their past lives and brought in the idea of karma to explain some of the difficulties his clients were experiencing in their present lifetime. Cayce's readings and predictions were by no means always accurate, but he succeeded in helping numerous individuals with their health challenges.

to imagine that the American public has adopted the idea of liberation (beyond heaven and hell) in sufficient numbers to yield this two-percent discrepancy in the figures.

In any case, despite our rampant Western materialism, a large number of people still maintain an essentially religious view, but very likely, the public's metaphysical notions are rather unsophisticated and vague. Since theologians are no longer quite so motivated in speculating about eschatological matters as they once were, other researchers—notably thanatologists—have picked up the slack, and today there is no dearth of publications on near-death experiences, channeling, and past life recall.

THE SCIENCE OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY

I mentioned earlier the studies of Joseph B. Rhine, which launched parapsychology as an independent scientific discipline. He and his wife Louisa joined Prof. William McDougall at Duke University in 1927. After eight years, it was felt that sufficient evidence had been accumulated in favor of the existence of so-called "paranormal phenomena" that, in 1935, the Parapsychology Laboratory was founded. In 1962, the Rhines created the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man, which funded their parapsychological research and which, in 1995, was renamed the Rhine Research Center. It is located in Durham, North Carolina.

Joseph B. and Louisa E. Rhine

In Europe, the scientific study of the paranormal started several decades earlier than the efforts in America and led, only as late as 1950 to a concerted effort on the part of Prof. Hans Bender, a German psychologist at the University of Freiburg, to integrate parapsychology into the academic curriculum. Around the same time, initiatives in other European countries, notably Holland and Austria, also met with some success in establishing parapsychology as an academic discipline.

Thus far, however, parapsychology has mostly been a poorly tolerated and controversial field of investigation within the academic setting. Nevertheless, this latecomer to academia has succeeded in contributing significantly to a more rounded understanding of human nature. Unfortunately, parapsychology's adoption of the "scientific method" (modelled after the methodology of the hard sciences) has proven rather self-limiting. By their very nature paranormal phenomena tend to be elusive and not necessarily repeatable in a rote manner. It would seem that the best way to experiment with them is by using the crucible of intensive Yoga practice.

Knowledge shrinks as wisdom grows.

—Alfred North Whitehead, *Aims of Education and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1929), Chapter 1

GOING BEYOND THE ORDINARY SENSES

atīndriya

Most of our experiences unfold within the domain of our five senses, but the Yoga authorities are adamant that sensory knowledge, important as it is, does not constitute all our knowledge and experience. They argue that there also is such a thing as *supra-sensory* knowledge, or *atīndriya-jnāna,* which is knowledge gained by means other than the five ordinary senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. This special type of knowledge can either be acquired through some super-sense, as cultivated by some Yoga practitioners, or through the mind itself. Patanjali acknowledges both sources in his *Yoga-Sūtra* and refers to the former by the technical name of *prātibha* or "(sensory) illumination."

Knowledge that is unmediated by the senses but wells up directly in the mind is known as "yogi's perception" (*yogi-pratyaksha*), or "direct realization" (*sākshātkarana*), that is, unmediated mental perception. Both Sanskrit terms contain the word *aksha* meaning "eye," but here the mind's eye is intended: *pratyaksha = prati* ("before, relative to") + *aksha*; *sākshātkarana = sa* ("with") + *akshāt* ("from the eye") + *karana* ("causing"). Patanjali actually uses the latter term in aphorism 3.18.

In his extraordinary book *The Future of the Body,* which was in the making for 15 years, human-potential pioneer and Esalen co-founder Michael Murphy has compiled a massive amount of information about the body's and the mind's extraordinary abilities. This work demonstrates, among other things, that paranormal abilities are known to all cultures and traditions throughout the world. Murphy, who is best known for his novel *Golf in the Kingdom,* also co-authored with Rhea White the rather popular book *In the Zone: Transcendent Experience in Sports*.

When, in aphorism 2.55, Patanjali states that through the disciplined practice of sensory inhibition the senses become supremely obedient, or pliant, we may understand this in two ways. First, *pratyāhāra* enhances the practitioner's ability to withdraw the senses from the sensory world and maintain them for a prolonged period of time in this state of sensory inhibition. Second, the senses become highly refined, leading to the super-senses (*atīndriya*) that are familiar phenomena in the world of Yoga. Often these special sensory capacities are called "divine" (*divya*), as in "divine seeing" (*divya-darshana*) or "divine hearing"

> Traditional scientific method has always been at the very best 20–20 hindsight. It's good for seeing where you've been. It's good for testing the truth of what you think you know, but it can't tell you where you ought to go.
>
> —Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (New York: Bantam, repr. 1974), Chapter 24

(*divya-shrotra*). Through them, a Yoga adept attains the ability to see at enormous distances or to see something extremely minute, or to hear at inordinate distances. We learn from the *Yoga-Sūtra* (3.41) that divine hearing, for instance, requires a particular exercise in the ecstatic state, which depends on complete sensory inhibition. I will discuss this shortly.

In comparison with the well-known eight great powers (*ashta-siddhi*), these are lesser paranormal attainments. According to aphorism 3.36, as explained in Lesson 6, the sensory "flashes-of-illumination" (*prātibha*) are obstacles on the path. While some practitioners go out of their way to develop their senses into supersenses (*atīndriya*), in most cases supersensory activity occurs spontaneously and may even be found distracting. Would *you* like to have a dog's extraordinary sense of smell or the unbelievably acute hearing of a bat, unless you could also switch off those senses on command?

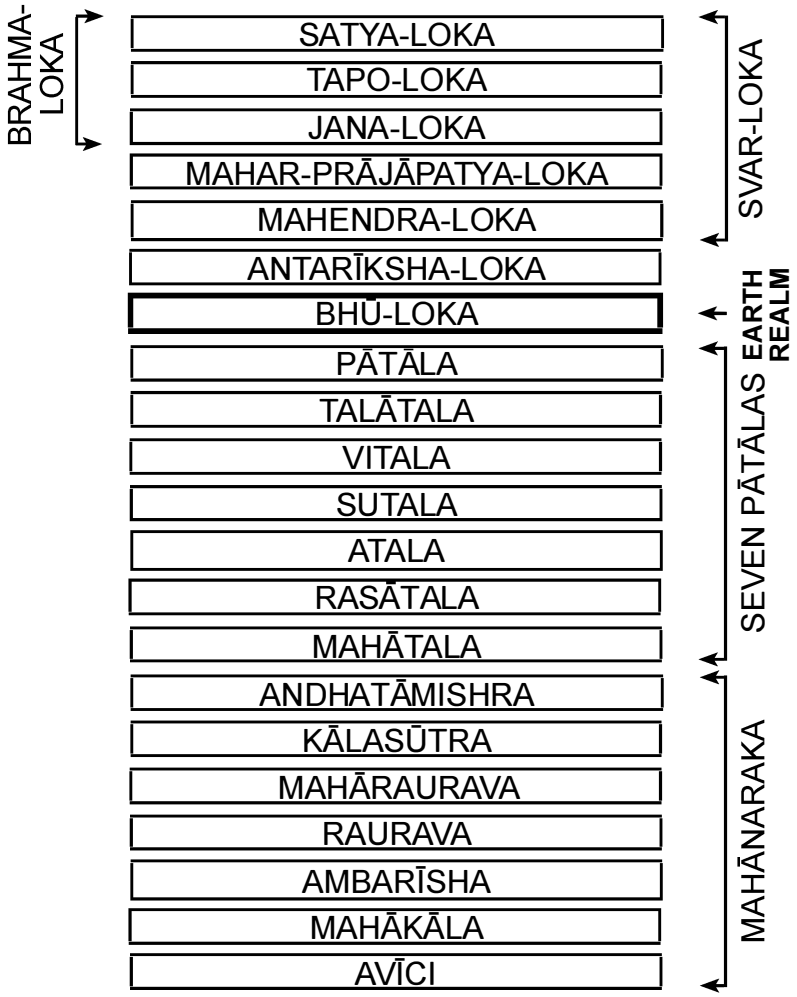
Intensive Yoga practice definitely makes a practitioner rather sensitive, and this can even become something of a problem until this sensitivity is matched by the mental ability to stay balanced. There is good reason why many Yoga scriptures recommend that one should retire to a quiet location in order to pursue *sādhana* more rigorously. Few modern Yoga practitioners, who are mostly householders, can dedicate themselves exclusively to contemplative life and therefore must make compromises with the hustling bustling world in which they live. Not surprisingly, exceedingly few of them ever make real progress in their meditation practice, *but* absolutely all of them *could* nevertheless experience genuine spiritual growth. For, there is no better opportunity to develop the moral virtues than in the midst of daily life, and it far more important to learn kindness, compassion, generosity, and patience than it is to become a virtuoso of meditation.

Yoga warns its followers to examine critically all phenomenal experiences. Yoga advises all practitioners to adopt reason, logic, philosophy, and scientific methods in experimentation, instead of to become mystery-seekers and spirit-chasers. There are more things in mind than in heaven and earth. Heaven and hell are products of mind. Mind is greater than anything in the universe. All things depend on mind for perception and existence . . . Most theories in the West are built on non-admission of telepathy and clairvoyance. Yoga admit not only that such phenomena are possible but that they have been confirmed by experience of yogins in meditation . . . Telepathy, clairvoyance, etc., are not the aim of Yoga practice. They are by-products of this practice.

—Rammurti S. Mishra, *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology* (London: Lyrebird Press, n.d.), p. 103

YOGA COSMOLOGY

The senses give us information about the material world, which, however, is only the outermost or coarsest layer of cosmic existence. As explained in Lesson 4, Patanjali viewed the Cosmos as a multi-level structure. In all probability, he subscribed to the common Hindu (Purānic) conception of the subtle universe as having clearly distinguishable layers or regions (*loka*). As Vyāsa expounds in his *Yoga-Bhāshya* (3.26), there are altogether seven higher worlds (including the earthly realm), seven netherworlds, and the seven levels (*bhūmi*) of hell:



The above twenty-one realms extend from the most luminous (heavenly) realm to the abysmal realm of Avīci occupied by demonic beings for whom there can be no redemption. Together they form the

cosmic or "brahmic" egg (*brahma-anda*), that is, the manifested (coarse and subtle) Cosmos. By comparison with the unmanifested cosmic matrix (*prakriti-pradhāna*), as Vyāsa notes, the cosmic egg is little more than a firefly.

Vyāsa further explains that those adepts who have attained the state of conscious disembodiment (*videha*) or resolution into the cosmic matrix (*prakriti-laya*) are beyond even the world of the creator deity Brahma (*brahma-loka*). The liberated adept (*kevalin*), however, is beyond the Cosmos as a whole, being present entirely as Spirit (*purusha*).

In the absence of direct yogic experience, it is difficult for us to make sense of this kind of cosmology, and we are prone to dismiss it as mythological fantasy. Some *yogins,* however, insist that these diverse realms, high and low, actually exist. Patanjali, in aphorism 3.26, insists that all this can be verified in the state of ecstasy, which I will discuss in Lesson 14. For the present purpose, let it suffice to say that *samādhi* has a twofold function. On the one hand, it is used to transcend the body-mind in order to achieve liberation; on the other hand, it can be employed to acquire extrasensory knowledge about the universe and paranormal powers by which the *yogin* gains mastery of the world. Thus, the combined practice of concentration, meditation, and ecstasy—which goes by the technical designation of "constraint" (*samyama*)—is a "research tool" for the *yogin* who wishes to explore the world he lives in.

In case you are curious about the meaning of the Sanskrit names of the various levels of existence, here are some explanations, which you might find helpful: *Loka* means "realm"; *satya* is "truth" or "reality"; *tapo* is formed from *tapas* meaning "asceticism"; *jana* means "people"; *mahar-prājāpatya-loka* is the great realm of the creator deity Prajāpati; *mahendra-loka* is the Great Indra's Realm. The top three heavenly realms are collectively referred to as *brahma-loka,* or "Brahma's Realm." The top five levels, again, are collectively called "heaven" (*svar*). They are desirable places to be, but they still fall far short of liberation, and their respective denizens, while having enormously long life-spans, are also subject to karma and reincarnation.

Antarīksha-loka is the mid-heavenly region, which is thought to extend to the pole star. *Bhū-loka,* the Earth Realm, is our human world of seven continents with Mount Meru at its center. As will become clear from the textual descriptions of the Earth Realm, it does not quite correspond to our familiar world but entails subtle, hidden aspects that are accessible only to the specially trained vision of *yogins* and *yoginīs.* The most important feature of *bhū-loka* is undoubtedly Mount Meru or Sumeru, the golden axial mountain, which is studded with precious stones and is the abode of all kinds of nonhuman entities. For the Shaivites, God Shiva (Mahādeva) and his divine spouse Pārvatī have their seat at the summit of Mount Meru. According to Tantra and Hatha-Yoga, the axial mountain has its microcosmic (human) correlate in the spinal column.

Does Shiva actually exist? For the pious Shaivite, this question would be as irreverent as the question "Does God exist?" when asked a Christian, Jew, or Muslim. Yet, it is fair enough to ask, since Shiva is not only the ultimate, formless Reality but also is portrayed in iconography and religious literature as a superperson endowed with

a particular character and history. To refine my question: Does Shiva, as portrayed in the *Purānas* and other Hindu scriptures, exist? Is there a deity who combines rigorous asceticism with moments of great sexual passion, who has an immortal human body besmeared with ashes, a cobra draped around his neck, and with long hair piled up in a top knot, and who carries a menacing trident? Not a few *yogins* insist that such a being exists and that, in fact, they have had a vision of him. They would smile at our doubtfulness. Their mystical visions are as real to them as is our perception of the material world to us.

☐ Now read Chapter 21 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

BEINGS ON THE LOWER SUBTLE PLANE

The beings which inhabit the astral dimension [i.e., lower subtle plane] are spiritually similar to living people and escept that they do not of course have a physical body, they resemble human beings in their capacity to experience strong emotions and desires. In fact, these feels are experienced more intensely and in a purer form in the astral dimension, as are certain sense impressions. In the material world, our minds cooperate with the physical senses, but those things which are perceived in the astral dimension change in accordince with the sensing mind. Consequently, perception of an image or impression is more pwoerful and more refined in the astral dimension, and many of those who enter this dimension after death with a strong emotional attachment have great difficulty overcoming it. Furthermore, the mind of the spirit in the astral dimension possesses a level of energy that invests it with a psychokinetic power to alter at will, not only its own spiritual form, but also the objects that constitute the world that it inhabits.

—Hiroshi Motoyama, *Toward a Superconsciousness,* pp. 73–74.

NOTE: Hiroshi Motoyama (1925–) graduated from the Tokyo University of Literature and Science with doctoral degrees in philosophy and physiological psychology. He is an experienced Yoga master and head priest of the Shinto Tamamitsu Shrine in Tokyo. He also is the founder-director of the Institute for Religious Psychology (1960) and the International Association for Religion and Parapsychology (1972) and was granted a McDougal Research Fund award from Duke University in 1962 for his scientific research into paranormal phenomena. He is the author of over 50 books.

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PARANORMAL ABILITIES ACCORDING TO PATANJALI

If the paranormal abilities—called *siddhi* ("accomplishment") or *vibhūti* ("manifestation")—were not integral to Yoga, Patanjali would never have paid so much attention to him. As it is, he dedicated a large part of the third portion (*pāda*) of the *Yoga-Sūtra* to delineate a good many of them. Some of these abilities are the fruit of attaining mastery of the breath or other preliminary yogic techniques, but most of them derive from intensive meditation practice, including ecstasy. Patanjali's catalogue of paranormal abilities starts with aphorism 3.16:

3.16: PARINĀMA-TRAYA-SAMYAMĀD ATĪTA-ANĀGATA-JNĀNAM

"Through constraint on the three [types of] transformation [discussed in aphorisms 3.13-3.15*], knowledge of the past and the future [is gained]."

3.17: SHABDA-ARTHA-PRATYAYĀNĀM ITARA-ITARA-ADHYĀSĀT SAMKARAS TAT-PRAVIBHĀGA-SAMYAMĀT SARVA-BHŪTA-RŪTA-JNĀNAM

"[There is a natural] confusion (*samkara*) of idea, object, and word [on account of an erroneous] superimposition on one another. Through constraint upon the distinction of these [confused aspects], knowledge of the sound of all beings [is acquired]."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.16–17 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: I have made some minor changes in the translation of the above two aphorisms. In aphorism 3.17, please note the difference betweeen the terms *samkara* ("confusion") and *samskāra* ("activator").

*See Lesson 15.

Knowledge of the future (or precognition) is the most commonly reported extrasensory phenomenon. Six weeks prior to his assassination, Abraham Lincoln dreamed that he was part of a long procession of mourners at the White House and, in his dream, was shocked when he saw himself laid out in the coffin.

3.18: SAMSKĀRA-SĀKSHĀTKARANĀT PŪRVA-JĀTI-JNĀNAM

"Through direct-perception (*sākshātkarana*) of the subliminal activators (*samskāra*), [the *yogin* gains] knowledge of [his] previous birth(s)."

3.19: PRATYAYASYA PARA-CITTA-JNĀNAM

"[Through direct-perception] of an idea [in the mind of another being], knowledge of another's mind [is obtained]."

3.20: NA CA TAT SA-ĀLAMBANAM TASYA AVISHAYĪ-BHŪTATVĀT

"But [this direct knowledge] does not [extend to] the [objective] support associated with that [idea], because of its being absent [from the mind of the other being]."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.18–3.20 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have again made some minor changes in the translation of aphorisms 3.18 and 3.19, while the change made in aphorism 3.20 is more extensive to bring out the meaning more clearly. The phrase *sa-ālambanam* (=*sālambanam*) qualifies the word *tasya* ("of that") and refers to the actual object ("support") that served the *yogin* as the subject of his meditation. Since Patanjali regards the world as existing independently from the mind, the ecstatic knowledge gained by contemplating another being's mind does not extend to the actual object but is limited to its mental representation. Thus, if you took an apple for your objection of meditation, a *yogin* ecstatically focusing on the *idea* of the apple in your mind would not come to know the *actual* apple, which you might have eaten in the meantime.

3.21: KĀYA-RŪPA-SAMYAMĀT TAD-GRĀHYA-SHAKTI-STAMBHE CAKSHUH PRAKĀSHA-ASAMYOGE'NTARDHĀNAM

"Through constraint on the form of the body, upon the suspension (*stambha*) of the capacity to be perceived, [that is to say] upon the disruption (*asamyoga*) of the light [traveling from that body] to the eye, [there follows] invisibility."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorisms 3.21 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Some editions of the *Yoga-Sūtra* read *asamprayoga* instead of *asamyoga,* which essentially has the same meaning. Invisibility is one of the popular magical powers of legends, and here we learn that *yogins* take this paranormal very seriously. The term *grāhya* ("to be perceived") can also stand for the object of perception. Thus, a more sophisticated rendering of the phrase *tad-grāhya-shakti-stambhe* would be "upon the suspension of the capacity [to be] an object." The term *antardhāna* means as much as "disappearance," which in terms of the visual sense amounts to "invisibility." The initial *a* of *antardhāna* is elided here, because it follows the vowel *e.*

Some editions of the *Yoga-Sūtra* include an additional aphorism before 3.22, which reads: *etena shabda-ādy antardhānam uktam,* "By this the disappearance of sound etc. is explained." However, this aphorism very probably belongs to Vyāsa's commentary.

3.22: SA-UPAKRAMAM NIRUPAKRAMAM CA KARMA TAT-SAMYAMĀD APARĀNTA-JNĀNAM ARISHTEBHYO VĀ

"Karma [is of two kinds]: acute and deferred. Through constraint on it, or from omens, [the *yogin* acquires] knowledge of death (*aparānta*)."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorisms 3.22 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: *Sa-upakrama* **(***sopakrama***)** denotes "acute," while *nirupakrama* stands for "deferred" karma. The former is karma that is presently active, which is also known as *prārabdha,* and the latter is future karma, which lies in wait for us. One of the aspects or side effects of karma is one's length of life, and the *yogin* can foresee his own and and that of other beings by practicing ecstatic constraint (*samyama*), making the karmic seeds in the Unconscious the mainstay of his concentrated mind. Alternatively, omens (*arishta*) can also give him important clues to the time or even type of death. *Yogin* pay attention to omens, knowing that everything is interrelated and that therefore one thing can give him valuable clues about something else.

3.23: MAITRY-ĀDISHU BALĀNI

"[Through constraint] on friendliness (*maitrī*) and so forth, [the *yogin* acquires] powers."

3.24: BALESHU HASTI-BALA-ĀDĪNI

"[Through constraint] on powers, [the acquires] powers [comparable to those of] an elephant, and so forth."

3.26: BHUVANA-JNĀNAM SŪRYE SAMYAMĀT

"Through constraint on the Sun, [he gains] knowledge of the world."

3.27: CANDRE TĀRĀ-VYŪHA-JNĀNAM

"[Through contraint] on the Moon, [he gains] knowledge of the arrangement of the stars."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.23–3.24 and 3.26–3.27 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Aphorism 3.25 is explained on the next page. In 3.27, the term *vyūha* ("arrangment") is noteworthy. It could possibly refer to the zodiac, which is a meaningful grouping of certain stars.

3.28: DHRUVE TAD-GATI-JNĀNAM

"[Through constraint] on the pole star, [he gains] knowledge of its movement."

3.29: NĀBHI-CAKRE KĀYA-VYŪHA-JNĀNAM

"[Through constraint] on the navel 'wheel,' [he gains] knowledge of the organization of the body."

3.30: KANTHA-KŪPE KSHUT-PIPĀSĀ-NIVRITTIH

"[Through constraint] on the 'throat well,' the cessation of hunger and thirst [is accomplished]."

3.31: KŪRMA-NĀDYĀM STHAIRYAM

"[Through constraint] on the 'tortoise duct,' [the *yogin* gains] steadiness."

3.32: MŪRDHA-JYOTISHI SIDDHA-DARSHANAM

"[Through constraint] on the light in the head, [he gains] vision of the [perfected] adepts."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.28–3.32 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have made only slight alterations in the translation of the above *sūtras.* Regarding the *kūrma-nādī* in aphorism 3.31, most of the traditional commentaries locate it in the chest, but King Bhoja, in his *Rāja-Mārtanda*, probably correctly locates it "below the tongue," that is, as the larynx in the throat, where the sensations of hunger and thirst can be felt. Patanjali would, however, have been familiar with the concept of subtle pranic channels or arcs called *nādīs,* which are mentioned already in the early *Upanishads.* The light in the head mentioned in 3.32, which can be experienced in meditation, is a sign of the presence of *sattva* in the mind. As our meditation practice deepens, light phenomena (called "photisms") become more common. In Tāraka-Yoga, such internal phenomena are consciously cultivated (see the *Advaya-Tāraka-Upanishad* and *Mandala-Brāhmana-Upanishad;* a translation of the former can be found in my book *The Yoga Tradition,* pp. 321–324).

3.25: PRAVRITTY-ĀLOKA-NYĀSĀT SŪKSHMA-VYAVAHITA-VIPRAKRISHTA-JNĀNAM

"By focusing the flashing-forth (*āloka*) of [those mental] activities [that are sorrowless and illuminating] [on a given object of meditation], [the *yogin* gains] knowledge of the subtle and remote [aspects of that object]."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.25 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have rephrased the rendering of the above *sūtra* somewhat. Contrary to the opinion, for instance, of Rammurti Mishra (*Textbook of Yoga,* p. 257), the technique described does not belong

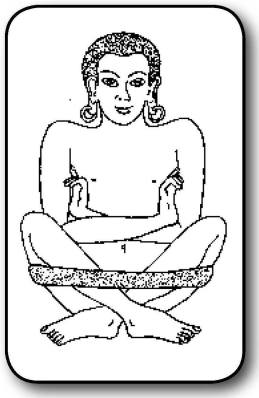
to the discussion of *samyama,* and hence I have placed it here separately. The explanations found in the commentaries are not very helpful in understanding how this practice is actually to be done. The term *pravritti* must be changed to *pravritty* because of the following *ā* sound.

PERFECTED ADEPTS

In aphorism 3.32, Patanjali refers to the perfected adepts, or *siddhas,* who can appear to the *yogin* in mystical visions. Who are they? In his commentary on this *sūtra*, Vyāsa mentions that the *siddhas* roam in the space between Heaven and Earth, that is, the mid-region or atmosphere. Thus, they are accomplished adepts who have gained mastery of the laws of Nature. The *Mahābhārata* epic, which precedes the *Yoga-Sūtra,* is full of stories of such extraordinary beings.

Etymologically, the word *siddha* stems from the same root as the term *siddhi* ("accomplishment, perfection, attainment"), namely *sidh* ("to succeed, to achieve"). This grammatical root is related to the root *sādh,* which also means "to accomplish" and from which the term *sādhana* (standing for the cultivation of spiritual practice) is formed. A *siddha,* then, is someone who has perfected his *sādhana* and attained the various *siddhis,* or spiritual and paranormal attainments.

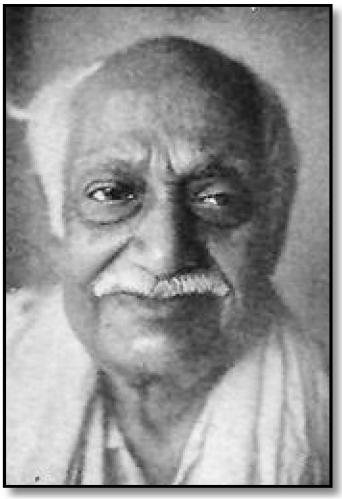
From Patanjali's perspective, they are not yet fully liberated. Other Yoga traditions, however, include fully liberated masters in this category, who are then often called "great adepts" (*mahā-siddha*). The best-known adepts of this kind are the accomplished masters of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, notably Matsyendra, Goraksha, Caurangī, and Jālandhara on the Hindu side and Nāgārjuna, Saraha, Nāropa, and Tilopa on the Buddhist side.



Having perfected reason, [the sages] unhesitatingly left it far behind and then perfected the higher faculty of insight, wherein knowledge and being merge into one.

—Paul Brunton, *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga,* p.176

SIDDHA PATANJALI



Have you ever wondered where Patanjali, who probably lived over 1800 years ago, is now? Do you think he attained liberation, or was he perhaps only a pundit compiling information about Yoga without the benefit of advanced spiritual realization? One well-known Hindu *guru* once affirmed that he himself had been Patanjali and that he had to return to a human embodiment in order to complete his spiritual journey. Possibly.

In 1998, *Moksha Journal* brought an interview by Maryellen Lo Bosco with Prof. Debabrata Sensharma, the editor of *International Journal of Tantric Studies,* which contained a very interesting statement by the professor that perhaps sheds some light on the Patanjali mystery.

According to Prof. Sensharma, the famous twentieth-century Bengali adept-scholar Gopinath Kaviraj had told him that he, Gopinath Kaviraj, had been a student of a certain spiritual practitioner by the name of Shivarama Kinkar Yogatrayananda. This Shivarama, a householder *yogin,* was pinned on understanding the *Yoga-Sūtra* in its full depth but could not find anyone qualified to authentically expound to him Patanjali's teaching. He was so distraught that he resolved to abandon his body. No sooner had he reached this rather desperate decision that the perceived a "beautifully illuminated form" in his room, which took the form of a human being. At first Shivarama thought he was dreaming, but this impression vanished when the mysterious being identified himself as Patanjali and announced "I will teach you."

Shivarama brought the Sanskrit text of the *Yoga-Sūtra* and just by turning the folios and without actually reading the book, he understood the deeper meaning of the *sūtras.* Later he passed this knowledge on to Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj.

Debabrata Sensharma, a professor of Sanskrit at Kurukshetra University, is a leading authority on Kashmiri Shaivism and the author of *The Philosophy of Sādhanā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990). He also edited *Matsyendra Samhitā* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1994) [Bibliotheca Indica, no. 138]

Gopinath Kaviraj (1887-1976), a retired principal of the Varanasi Sanskrit College and a devotee of the woman mystic Anandamayi Ma, authored many scholarly works, including editions and translations of important Sanskrit texts.

3.33: PRĀTIBHĀD VĀ SARVAM

"Or through a flash-of-illumination (*prātibha*), [the *yogin* acquires knowledge of] all."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.33 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: Further to Vyāsa's explanation, as given in my book, he seems to regard this aphorism as referring to a very high level of realization, which Patanjali briefly describes in aphorism 3.54. If correct, this *sūtra* seems completely out of place here. In fact, Chapter 3 of the *Yoga-Sūtra* appears somewhat disjointed. More than the other chapters, its subject matter naturally lends itself to expansion and interpolation, which would seem to have occurred.

3.34: HRIDAYE CITTA-SAMVIT

"[Through constraint on the heart [the *yogin* gains] understanding of [the nature of] the mind."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.34 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In my book, I have translated *citta* with "consciousness," but I now prefer to render this term more generically as "mind." See the next page for a discussion of the heart as a yogic locus (*desha*). This aphorism seems to have been interpolated between 3.33 and 3.35, which should be read together. See the article on the cave of the heart on the next page.

OMNISCIENCE

Aphorism 3.33 and others mention the yogic feat of omniscience. Must we take this literally? The *yogins* insist that we do. The practice of ecstatic "constraint," or *samyama,* reveals the *particularity* on whatever object the mind alights—from the most minute to the greatest magnitude. Thus, the adept can make the whole universe his or her object of contemplation and thereby come to know, by direct participation rather than mere intellection, the world in its entirety. Omniscience, needless to say, is a high-level attainment that is commonly associated with the ultrareflective ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*), which is discussed in some detail in Lessons 14 and 15.

Samyama is the *yogin's* way of doing research and acquiring knowledge about the world. This method is not only more efficient than the so-called "objective method" of science, because it is gained by experiencing objects from the inside, but it also contributes to our personal spiritual evolution and freedom.

MEDITATING ON THE CAVE OF THE HEART

The heart (*hrid* or *hridaya*) has long been a primary focal point for yogic concentration and meditation. Already the archaic *Rig-Veda* (3.26.8) speaks of the heart following inspired thought (*mati*). Thus, the heart was regarded in Vedic times as an important integrative function, involving higher feelings.

In the *Taittirīya-Āranyaka* (3.13), we can read:

> The heart is like a down-turned lotus,
> which is a span below the neck and a span above the navel.
> Know the heart to be the abode of God.
> Surrounded by nerves, it hangs down like a lotus bud.
> At its [upper] end is a subtle nerve,
> in which is established the Being, who is everything.

Similar to the above psychospiritual notions, the *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (4.1.7) declares the heart to be the "abode" (*āyatana*) of the Ultimate Reality and the "support" (*pratishthā*) of all things. The same Sanskrit scripture (4.2.3) speaks of the single hairlike conduit (*nādī*) that rises from the heart and splits a thousandfold (at the head).

The *Brahma-Sūtra* (1.2.11), which was composed possibly c. 200 B.C., reflects this esoteric knowledge in one of its aphorisms, as follows:

> The two selves who have entered the cave [of the heart] are indeed [the individuated self and the transcendental Self], because [they are] seen [thus in the state of ecstasy]. (*guham pravishtāv ātmanau hi tad-darshanāt*)

Generally, this meditative heart is thought to be located at the very center of the chest and is held to coincide with what in the Tantric tradition is called the *anāhata-cakra* ("wheel of the unstruck [sound]"). But tradition also knows of a spiritual heart that is situated to the right of the heart muscle. This is explained in the following letter written by T. K. Sundaresa Iyer on behalf of Sri Ramana Maharshi to a devotee of that great adept of South India:

> Just as there is a cosmic center from which the whole universe arises and has its being and functions with the power or the directing energy emanating therefrom, so also is there a center within the frame of the physical body wherein we have our being. This center in the human body is in no way different from the cosmic center. It is this center in us that is called the Hridaya, the seat of Pure Consciousness, realized as Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. This is really what we call the seat of God in us.
>
> It is this Hridaya that is said to be different from the physical heart, regulating the blood circulation. The Hridaya has its being on the right side and is not

Continued on next page

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commonly known or felt. The primary thought in us arising as 'I,' when traced to its source, ends somewhere in us and this place, where all thoughts die, where the ego has vanished, is the Hridaya. From this center is felt and enjoyed the Pure Consciousness.

Hridaya described as 'the literal, actual, physical seat of the intuition of the Self' has the meaning explained above. Perhaps the words 'physical seat' may create some confusion. What it really means is that there is a center of Pure Consciousness in the physical body. It is related to the physical, but is not itself physical.

The word Hridaya is a composite of hrid and ayam - "center, this". It is the center on the right, which we reach as a result of meditation (Samadhi). From the Hridaya, consciousness arises to the sahasrara through the sushumna and from there spreads out to all the parts of the body through the several 'nadis'. Then alone we become conscious of the objects around us. Man, due to the illusion that these have real existence, experiences suffering, as he strays far away from his Self. The seat from where all these arise and manifest is the Hridaya.

Whether in sleep, joy, sorrow, fear or satisfaction, we return to this heart and that is why we feel lost to all consciousness of things around. If by meditation or Vichara [*vicāra*] we attain to our centre, the Hridaya, and thus are our real Self, we enjoy unalloyed bliss.

In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the Hridaya on the right, manifesting as 'Aham' 'Aham'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this sphurana (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence.

When we steady our breath we feel the steadying of our thoughts. Then the thoughts turn inward and melt away at a point. Watching this point, where the thoughts vanish, will also help us to merge ourselves in the Hridaya.

In Kashmiri Shaivism, *hridaya* also refers to the Ultimate Reality itself, which makes perfect sense from the perspective of mystical experiencing. The *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* (5.3.1) essentially affirmed the same 2,000 years earlier.

The *Dhyāna-Bindu-Upanishad* (50), which belongs to the early post-Christian era, describes the individuated consciousness (*jīva-ātman*) as whirling round and round in the twelve-spoked wheel of the heart, impelled by its good and bad karma. Only enlightenment can stop this incessant motion.

According to a much older Upanishadic teaching, enlightenment is prevented by the "knots" (*granthi*) in the heart, which are all the worldly desires that tend to externalize our consciousness. Other works identify this knot as the mood of doubt (*samshaya*).

3.38: BANDHA-KĀRANA-SHAITHILYĀT PRACĀRA-SAMVEDANĀC CA CITTASYA PARA-SHARĪRA-ĀVESHAH

"Through the relaxation of the causes of attachment [to the body] and through the experience of 'going forth,' the mind [is capable of] entering another's body."

3.39: UDĀNA-JAYĀJ JALA-PANKA-KANTAKA-ĀDISHV ASANGA UTKRĀNTISH CA

"Through mastery of the up-breath, [the *yogin* acquires the power of] nonadhesion to water, mud, or thorns and [also the power of] rising."

3.40: SAMĀNA-JAYĀJ JVALANAM

"Through mastery of the mid-breath, [he gains] effulgence.

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.38–3.40 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Again, these aphorisms seem out of place in the discussion of *samyama,* which is resumed with aphorism 3.41. It is not clear what is meant by "effulgence" (*jvalana*), but we know from Kundalinī-Yoga that by activating the prānic energy of the navel region (i.e., *samāna*), the "inner heat" is fanned. This process underlies the Tibetan practice of *tumo* ("fierce female"), which enables its practitioners to dry soaked blankets in the middle of ice and snow. In 3.39, the word *ādishu* must be changed to *ādishv* because of the following *a* sound. In 3.40, *jayāt* must be changed to *jayāj* because of the following *j* sound of *jvalana.* The niceties of Sanskrit.

3.41: SHROTRA-ĀKĀSHAYOH SAMBANDHA-SAMYAMĀD DIVYAM SHROTRAM

"Through constraint on the relation between ear and ether/space (*ākāsha*), [the *yogin* acquires] the 'divine ear.'"

3.42: KĀYA-ĀKĀSHAYOH SAMBANDHA-SAMYAMĀL LAGHU-TŪLA-SAMĀPATTESH CA ĀKĀSHA-GAMANAM

"Through constraint on the relation between body and ether/space and through the coiciding [of the mind] with light [objects], such as cotton, [he obtains the power of] traversing the ether/space."

3.43: BAHIR-AKALPITĀ VRITTIR MAHĀ-VIDEHĀ TATAH PRAKĀSHA-ĀVARANA-KSHAYAH

"An external, nonimaginary activity [of the mind] is the 'Great Incorporeal' from which [comes] the dwindling of the coverings of the [inner] light."

3.44: STHŪLA-SVA-RŪPA-SŪKSHMA-ANVAYA-ARTHAVATTVA-SAMYAMĀD BHŪTA-JAYAH

"Through constraint on the coarse, the own-form, the subtle, the connectedness, and the purposiveness [of objects], [the *yogin* gains] mastery of the elements."

3.45: TATO'NIMĀ-ĀDI-PRĀDURBHĀVAH KĀYA-SAMPAT TAD-DHARMA-ANABHIGHĀTASH CA

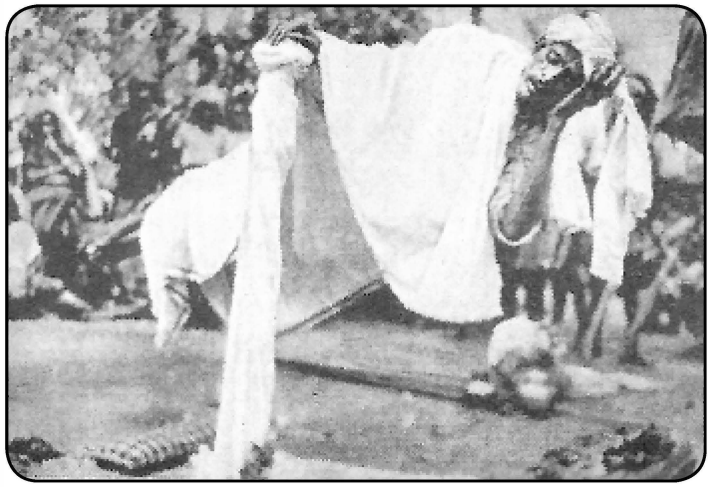
"Thence [results] the manifestation [of the paranormal powers], such as atomization and so forth, perfection of the body, and the indestructibility of its constituents."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.41–3.45 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Aphorism 3.41 makes an interesting connection between the ears and the material element of ether/space (*ākāsha*). The other four sense organs have similar correlations to the elements as follows: skin – air; eyes – fire; tongue – water; nose – earth. Relative to aphorism 3.42, the well-known 1887 experiment by Albert Michelson and Edward Morley is thought to have disproved the existence of a universal "luminiferous" ether. Yet, some scientists maintain that possibly that experiment only demonstrated the nonexistence of a *certain* kind of (or aspect of) ether, which leaves the classical notion of ether as a fifth material "element" intact. Thus, the yogic concept of ether/space (*ākāsha*) may still be valid. It certainly is so from the viewpoint of yogic mystical experience. We must recall here that Albert Einstein himself resurrected the concept of ether in 1920 in order to explain his general theory of relativity, though he kept changing his mind about it later. In quantum field theory, ether reappears in the concept of the so-called "Higgs Fields." Grammatically, you might like to know that in aphorism 3.42, the term *samyamāt* ("through constraint") must be changed to *samyamāl* because of the following *l* sound in the term *laghu.*

Levitating Yogin

In his book *Religion, Philosophy, Yoga* (pp. 357–358), the French indologist and physician Jean Filliozat, brings the interesting case of a *yogin* who was able to levitate out in the open by lightly holding his staff, as the photograph here shows.



Please note that aphorism 3.46 has been discussed in Lesson 8.

3.47: GRAHANA-SVA-RŪPA-ANVAYA-ARTHAVATTVA-SAMYAMĀD INDRIYA-JAYAH

"Through constraint on the process-of-perception (*grahana*), the own-form, I-am-ness, connectedness, and purposiveness, [the *yogin*] gains mastery of the senses."

3.48: TATO MANO-JAVITVAM VIKARANA-BHĀVAH PRADHĀNA-JAYASH CA

"Thence [follows] fleetness of the mind, the state lacking sense-organs, and the mastery of the [cosmic] matrix."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.47-3.48 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Aphorism 3.47 briefly describes the method of obtaining mastery of the senses (*indriya-jaya*). Aphorism 3.48 explains what happens when this particular practice of ecstatic constraint (*samyama*) is extended beyond the physical body to the subtle body, which lacks sense-organs: Now the *yogin* attains the ability to mentally go anywhere at the speed of mind (i.e., instantaneously) until he conquers the transcendental matrix (*pradhāna*) of the Cosmos itself, which would be equivalent to the state of a *prakriti-laya,* that is, an adept who has merged completely with the cosmic matrix. At such a high spiritual realization, the *yogin* becomes virtually capable of creating and dissolving his own universes, at least at the subtle plane, as is made clear in *sūtra* 3.49, but he is still not liberated.

CONTROL OVER THE SENSES

Control over the senses is a complex yogic process. It involves more than the technique of sensory inhibition (*pratyāhāra*) as a separate practice and also as a byproduct of concentration. It is one thing to temporarily suspend sensory activity by sheer willpower and quite another to have the senses come to rest because of deep renunciation, which calls for letting to of one's desires. For it is the pressure caused by unfulfilled desires that pulls consciousness back into the outside world via the senses. As the mind becomes peaceful through a growing mood of inner renunciation, sense activity automatically slows down as well.

At the highest level of this yogic process, the mind and senses become compliant with the adept's innermost promptings. Simultaneously, both mind and senses become incredibly flexible, so that they manifest extraordinary (paranormal) capacities.

This they deem to be Yoga: the steady holding of the senses. Then one becomes undistracted (*apramatta*), for Yoga waxes and wanes.

—*Katha-Upanishad* 2.3.11

I will discuss aphorisms 3.49–3.50 and 3.52–3.55 in Lesson 15 in conjunction with the higher (liberating) processes of Yoga. *Sūtra* 3.51 has already been discussed in Lesson 8.

To complete our consideration of the paranormal powers recognized in Yoga, we must now turn to Chapter 4 of the *Yoga-Sūtra.*

4.1: JANMA-OSHADHI-MANTRA-TAPAH-SAMĀDHI-JĀH SIDDHAYAH

"The [paranormal] attainments (*siddhi*) are the result of birth, herbs, *mantra*[-recitation], asceticism (*tapas*), or ecstasy."

■ Now read my commentary on aphorism 4.1 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: This aphorism really belongs to Chapter 3 and, I believe, was mistakenly prefixed to the highly philosophical consideration of the concluding chapter of Patanjali's work. The confusion, it would appear, originated with Vyāsa's commentary on aphorism 4.4, where he interprets Patanjali's *sūtra* as referring to a particular paranormal ability. Another, more metaphysical interpretation is possible and more in keeping with the tone of Chapter 4.

THE FIVE SOURCES OF PARANORMAL ATTAINMENTS

1. Janma-ja-siddhi, paranormal ability arising with one's birth, is explained in Vyāsa's *Yoga-Bhāshya* as "the power of having another body." In his *Tattva-Vaishāradī* gloss on Vyāsa's scholium, Vācaspati Mishra elucidates that this refers to someone at the subtle level (such as a heavenly realm) obtaining a still more perfect subtle body. I think a more comprehensive interpretation is possible, which would then allow us to include what might be called a "natural talent" for manifesting paranormal abilities. A good example would be young children who seem to remember certain aspects of their previous embodiment—a phenomenon intensively and extensively studied by Prof. Ian Stevenson at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

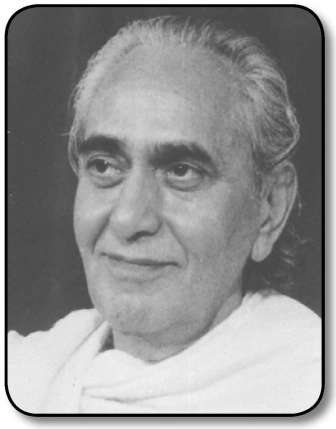
2. Oshadhi-ja-siddhi, paranormal ability resulting from herbal concoctions, according to Vyāsa, is the kind of *siddhi* that can be obtained by taking an alchemical elixir (*rasa*) "acquired in the domains of demons and so on." The esoteric discipline of alchemy (*rasāyana*) was highly developed in ancient India, and even today some great Yoga masters are also accomplished alchemists, especially in South India. Vyāsa cites Sage Māndavya, who lived in the Vindhya mountain range, as an example. Māndavya was impaled by robbers but kept himself alive by means of secret potions. Rāmānanda, in his *Mani-Prabhā,* mentions Sage Kapila, the semi-legendary founder of the Sāmkhya-Yoga tradition as an expert in herbal concoctions. The twentieth-century adept Nepali Baba is said to have demonstrated on the Gujarati adept Shri Yogeshwarji (1921–1984) how a particular herb was capable of producing an ecstatic state.

3. Mantra-ja-siddhi, paranormal ability gained by reciting specific *mantras,* is a well-known attainment especially in Tantra. Vyāsa explains that such powers include "space-walking" (i.e., astral projection?) and "atomization" (i.e., the ability to make oneself infinitely small).

4. Tapo-ja-siddhi, paranormal ability produced by virtue of stringent asceticism (*tapas*), which steels the will. The aforementioned Rāmānanda names the famous Sage Vishvamitra as an example.

5. Samādhi-ja-siddhi, paranormal ability arising from the cultivation of ecstasy, as referred to in many aphorisms of Chapter 3 of the *Yoga-Sūtra.*

YOU CAN DO TELEKINESIS!



Swami Rama

Did you know that you can move objects at a distance—a paranormal feat known as telekinesis (also known as psychokinesis or PK)? In fact, you do so every single day of your life! You will probably agree with me when I say that the mind is immaterial. Perhaps you would even agree with those scientists who consider the mind to be nonlocal. Is it not astounding that *your* mind, which is immaterial and nonlocal, should be able to move your entire body around wherever you (as mind) decide. Your immaterial nonlocal mind issues a single thought and your arm moves up or down, your hands grasp objects, your eyes gaze about, your mouth speaks and swallows food. How does the immaterial, nonlocal mind accomplish such telekinetic feats? And, above all, why can't you move other bodies, or objects, in the same manner? Or could you if you knew how?

Here are Yoga's answers to these questions: First of all, the immaterial mind cannot influence the material world directly but requires the intermediary agency of *prāna*. It is through the medium of the *prāna-maya-kosha* (which Patanjali does not mention) that the mind can influence the nervous system of the body and thus the material realm. If your mind was trained and strong enough, you could also

> The mind is a reservoir for numerous powers. By using the resources hidden within it, we can attain any height of success. If the mind is trained, made one-pointed and inward, it also has the power to penetrate into the deeper levels of our being. It is the finest instrument.
>
> —Swami Rama, *Fearless Living: Yoga and Faith* (Honesdale, Penn.: Himalayan Institute, 2005), p. 47

influence the larger prānic field surrounding your body and thereby produce telekinetic effects, as some *yogins* have demonstrated. Swami Rama, the founder of the Himalayan Institute, was one of the adepts to demonstrate telekinesis at the Menninger Foundation. Seated five feet away and wearing a mask over his mouth and nose, he caused a fourteen-inch aluminum knitting needle mounted on a shaft to spin by means of his mind only.

THE EIGHT GREAT PARANORMAL POWERS OF AN ADEPT

ashta-mahā-siddhi

The following eight great powers (*ashta-mahā-siddhi*), hinted at in aphorism 3.45, are universally acknowledged within the Yoga tradition:

1. *animan* ("atomization") or the ability to miniaturize oneself
2. *laghiman* ("levitation") or the ability to become weightless "like the tuft of a reed," as we learn from *Tattva-Vaishāradī* 3.45; the early twentieth-century adept Vishuddhananda, the *guru* of Gopinath Kaviraj, is said to have mastered the esoteric science of *vāyu-gamana* or "walking on air"—a feat also demonstrated on numerous occasions by Trailangaswami
3. *mahiman* ("magnification") or the ability to become infinitely large
4. *prāpti* ("extension") or the ability to bridge great distances instantly; according to the *Yoga-Bhāshya* 3.45, the *yogin* can touch the moon with his fingertips
5. *prākāmya* ("[irresistible] will") or the ability to always have one's will done regardless of any natural laws; thus, *Yoga-Bhāshya* 3.45 gives as an example the ability to dive into solid matter as if it were liquid
6. *vāshitva* ("mastery") or perfect mastery of the elements and their products; the above-mentioned adept Vishuddhananda, who is also mentioned in Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India,* is said to have been a master of *sūrya-vijnāna* ("solar knowledge")
7. *īshitritva* ("lordship") or perfect mastery of the subtle causes of the world, which makes the *yogin* equivalent to the creator deity Brahma
8. *kāma-avasāyitva* (fulfillment [of all] desires") or the unobstructed ability to will into existence whatever one desires

Are *yogins* merely indulging in fantasy when they subscribe to the above paranormal possibilities? Do we need to understand their claims as being purely metaphorical? Or do these extraordinary abilities belong only to the mind, or subtle body? The great masters themselves are perfectly clear on all of these: the eight paranormal powers are real and not fictional and, what is more, they are attainable. Why, then, do we not witness these abilities? Trusted disciples have witnessed them throughout the ages, even today. If this is so, why do the masters not transform our world into a paradise? In principle, the Yoga tradition affirms, they could

do so, and the reason why they are not relieving us of our collective misery is that their greater wisdom does not allow them, as Shankara Bhagavatpāda's *Yoga-Bhāshya-Vivarana* (3.45) states, to go against the will of the Lord (*īsvhara*). They respect the free will of living beings, who must be permitted to choose liberation or bondage.

PARANORMAL ABILITIES IN TIBETAN YOGA

The universality of paranormal abilities within the Yoga tradition is demonstrated by the fact that *siddhis* are acknowledged and cultivated also in Tibetan Buddhism. In his discussion of Je Tsongkhapa's exceptional treatment of Tantra in *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, the Dalai Lama explains that "supramundane feats" should require only slight effort on the part of the practitioner who has mastered meditative stabilization. (See Dalai Lama et al., *Yoga Tantra: Paths to Magical Feats,* pp. 64ff.) Tsongkhapa himself singles out paranormal feats such as not sinking in water, walking in space, finding treasures or lost articles, controlling another's mind, and physical transformation into the deity of one's contemplation. He also mentions that paranormal abilities can arise from meditation or rituals (specifically burnt offerings).

MAGIC IN TIBET

In her widely read book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet,* the French woman explorer and adventurer Alexandra David-Neel writes: "The belief in psychic phenomena, in miracles, and in magic is as alive in our days as it was in the Middle Ages. What we have gained is the freedom to speak of these things and to attempt the experience of them without having to fear the stakes of the Inquisition" (p. vii). And experiment she did. She learned Tibetan and adopted the ways of a *lama*, fearlessly pursuing spiritual practices and the magical arts. During her sojourn in the Land of Snow, she witnessed all sorts of unusual phenomena, and learned to produce not a few herself. She observed: "Regarding my own experience, I am certain that I did receive on several occasions telephatic messages from lamas under whom I had practised mental or psychic training. It may even be tht the number of these messages has been larger than I suspect. However, I have only retained a few cases in which the lama afterwards inquired if I had understood what he meant to tell at a given time" (p. 235).

YOGIC FEATS

That many yogins, outstripping all accomplishments feasible under hypnosis, can bring breathing and hearteats to a standstill for many hours and that some, who have specialized in this, are even able to swallow concentrated nitric acid or cyanide of potassium without adverse effects, or to produce fire by rubbing their arms, or can make themselves invisible even to the photographic plate,—such facts, though known to individual scientists have been more or less ignored by official science.

—Hans Jacobs, *Western Psychotherapy and Hindu Sadhana* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 209

THE FOUR STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

According to an old Vedāntic teaching expounded in the *Māndūkya-Upanishad*, there are four states (*catur-avasthā*) of consciousness. Patanjali would most certainly have been aware of this Vedānta teaching, though he makes no mention of it in his *Yoga-Sūtra.* The four states are waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*sushupti*), and what is called the Fourth (*caturtha* or *turīya*). Strictly speaking, the last-mentioned is not a state (*avasthā*) of consciousness at all but transcendental Awareness (*cit*) itself. In aphorism 1.38, which was covered in Lesson 11, Patanjali refers to *svapna* and *nidrā* (very probably equivalent to *sushupti*).

LUCID DREAMING

We examined lucid waking in Lesson 11. Now I would like to briefly discuss lucid dreaming and dream symbolism in the context of Yoga. There does not appear to be a Sanskrit equivalent for "lucid dreaming," but undoubtedly the concept is familiar to *yogins,* as is evident from Nāropa's Six Yogas, which includes the Yoga of the dream state (Tibetan: *milam*). Although aphorism 1.38 only speaks of insights arising from dream and deep sleep, there is no good reason to assume that Patanjali was unaware of lucid dreaming, or being consciously aware while dreaming. The whole thrust of the yogic enterprise is toward ever-increasing mindfulness and lucidity (*sattva*). As our Yoga practice deepens, it is inevitable that our dreams also should become more vivid and, in due course, more accessible to conscious control.

In modern times, lucid dreaming, which can be regarded as a yogic *siddhi*, was made popular by Stephen LaBerge, who authored the now classic book *Lucid Dreaming.* In 1987, he founded the Lucidity Institute in Palo Alto, California, and he also has invented a lucid-dream induction device called NovaDreamer. The Institute has the purpose of conduction research into, and promoting knowledge about, lucid dreaming and to this end offers training programs in lucidity.

Lucid dreaming, as the *yogins* of yore knew and as dream researchers like LaBerge have demonstrated, is a learnable skill. Not only makes the art of lucid dreaming our nightly forays into the hidden part of the mind more interesting, it also is an important tool for studying the Unconscious and gaining control of the mind.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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THE SIGN OF SIDDHAHOOD

When that which is seen disappears, nothing remains except the seer. The act of seeing also vanishes. For example, a person dreams that he is embracing his friend, but when he awakens there is neither friend nor embrace, and he naturally becomes still. To experience perfection is the glorious result of a Siddha's grace. Then, no matter what a person may see or experience, he perceives the same thing in all. He acquires the vision which penetrates beyond the distinction of seer and the seen. Just as the sky is full of itself and therefore remains motionless, similarly, once a person fully enters the Self, he never moves from that state. This is the sign of Siddhahood.

—Swami Muktananda, *Secret of the Siddhas*, p. 49

When men roll up space as if it were a piece of leather, then there will be an end of suffering . . .

—*Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* 6.20

Suggested Yoga Practice

YOGA-NIDRĀ

Yoga-nidrā ("Yoga sleep") is a spiritual technique that is a mix between conscious relaxation and meditative visualization. It appears was invented by Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1923–), who founded the Bihar School of Yoga, India. During his years of discipleship under the guidance of his *guru* Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887–1963) of Rishikesh, he would have night duties, which meant he would be asleep when other disciples were doing their morning recitations. Curiously, their chants would be imprinted on his brain in the state of sleep and upon waking he would know the words and melodies. This gave Swami Satyananda the idea later on, after carefully studying the Tantric texts, to utilize sleep for the spiritual process.

As a philosophical concept, *yoga-nidrā* is very much older, going back to God Vishnu's slumber between one world creation and another. Vishnu is depicted as reclining on the cosmic serpent Shesha (or Ananta) of whom Patanjali is said to have been a partial incarnation (*avatāra*).

Paramahansa Satyananda established Bihar School of Yoga in the same year in which his *guru* passed away. In 1988, he handed the organization over to his main disciple Swami Niranjananda (1960–), whom he had trained since the age of four, while he himself retired from all worldly activities and took to a life of sacred wandering in the traditional manner of a *parama-hamsa*.

There are quite a few audiotapes featuring the *yoga-nidrā* technique on the market, but not all adhere to the diverse versions taught by the Bihar School of Yoga. The following is as slightly simplified form of the simplest version of this exercise stemming directly from the Satyananda lineage, as furnished in Swami Satyananda's book *Yoga Nidra*. I first encountered this technique back in the late 1960s and on and off have made use of the audio recordings by several of Swami Satyananda's disciples, notably that by Swami Pragyamurti, who is the head of the Satyananda Center in London.

> Yoga nidra is a systematic method of inducing complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation . . . In this threshold state between sleep and wakefulness, contact with the subconscious and unconscious dimensions occurs spontaneously.
>
> —Swami Satyananda, *Yoga Nidra,* p. 1

To practice *yoga-nidrā,* you must listen to an audio recording, and therefore it is important to find one that you like to listen to. Please read or have a friend with a pleasant voice read the text on the next page into a tape recorder, which you then play whenever you wish to practice this technique. Alternatively, use the text of an existing recording by the Bihar School of Yoga or one of its representatives. I do *not* recommend audio recordings that deviate from the BSY text significantly.

For the next three weeks, practice the following technique at least four times a week ideally always at the same time (whether morning or evening) and in a quiet spot where you know you will not be disturbed. Switch off the telephone and door bell, so that your relaxed, meditative state of mind will not be interrupted by a loud noise, which can rattle your mind considerably. Subsequently, write down your experiences with this practice. If, for some reason, *yoga-nidrā* should stir up your unconscious too much, you might instead want to practice the Corpse Posture, as described in Lesson 1. *Yoga-nidrā* has the following eight phases:

1. Physical preparation

Lie in the Corpse Posture, as taught in Lesson 1, and listen to the recording for the full duration of this exercise. In other words, *do not fall asleep!*

2. Resolution (*samkalpa*)

Make a resolution, which you must have chosen after careful deliberation of your situation. The resolution should reflect your deepest spiritual desire and be expressed in the form of "**I will** awaken my spiritual potential" or "**I will** be more mindfull," and so on. After finding the best *samkalpa* for yourself, affirm it sincerely and do not change it until you see a real difference in your life (allowing appropriate time!). Repeat your resolution silently *three* times.

In yoga nidra, the consciousness is in a state between waking and sleep, but it is subject to neither. In modern psychology, this has been termed 'the hypnagogic state' but I prefer to call it 'the hypnayogic state'. But the best name of all is 'yoga nidra'. In this state the mind is exceptionally receptive. Languages and other subjects can be learned rapidly. Suggestions given at this time are successful in removing unwanted habits and tendencies. In fact, yoga nidra can be used for directing the mind to accomplish anything. This is the secret of the extraordinary accomplishments of great yogis and swamis.

The practice of yoga nidra enables one to receive intuitions from the unconscious mind. This state is the fount of artistic and poetic inspiration. It is also the source of the most creative scientific discoveries.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *Yoga Nidra,* p. 6

3. Rotation of consciousness

Now follow the instructions of the audio recording. Visualize and feel each body part when it is mentioned, which is easier when you actually mentally repeat the name of each part. Don't think about the process, but simply follow the instructions. This part of the exercise is done quite rapidly.

4. Awareness of the breath

Continue to follow the instructions, which now ask you to focus your attention on the breath as it enters and leaves your nose, without interfering with its natural rhythm. This phase activates the prānic body and helps you to deepen your consciousness.

5. Awareness of sensations and feelings

Next follow the instructions about becoming aware of your sensations and feelings, which again takes you deeper into the relaxation/meditation process.

6. Visualization

You are now asked to visualize certain objects or symbols, which will trigger deeper levels of the Unconscious, taking your consciousness farther away from bodily awareness.

7. Repetition of the original resolution (*samkalpa*)

At this point, you will be profoundly relaxed, and now you reiterate *three* times and silently your original *samkalpa,* using the same formulaic declaration as before.

8. Gradual emergence from deep relaxation

Finally, bring your consciousness gently back to the waking state. Don't just rush up but relish for a few moments the afterglow of your relaxed mind!

The following are the instructions for the audio recording, which should extend to about 20 minutes. Read the text slowly and clearly into the recorder, allowing for pauses where indicated.

Please get ready for *yoga-nidrā.* Lie on your back in the Corpse Posture. Make sure you are comfortable, so that you won't have to move around during the exercise. Inhale deeply and then upon exhaling let all your concerns flow out of your body and mind. *[Pause]*

Now resolve that you will make the most of this practice and that you will remain awake and alert so as to gain maximum benefit from your efforts. Simply listen to the instructions and follow them in your mind. *[Pause]*

Feel your whole body and allow it to become relaxed and still. Mentally slowly repeat the sound *ommmmm . . . ommmmm . . . ommmmm.* Listen to this sound reverberating in your body, as you become more and more relaxed. You are relaxing more and more deeply . . . . more and more deeply. . . *[Pause]*

Feel your whole body relaxing from top to toe. . . *[Pause]*

You are sinking deeper into the floor, relaxing more and more. . . *[Pause]*

[Allow up to five minutes for this initial relaxation]

Now make your resolution, or *samkalpa*. Repeat it three times. This resolve is bound to come true in your life. Your sincere resolve will be effective and will manifest in your life. *[Pause]*

Now begin the rotation of consciousness by traveling in your mind through the various parts of your body. *[Speak more quickly than before but slow enough for a person to be able to follow the instructions without straining.]* Feel your right thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger. Feel your palm, back of the right hand, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, armpit, right waist, hip, right thigh, kneecap, calf, ankle, heel, sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, big toe, second toe, third toe, forth toe, little toe.

Now become aware of and feel your left thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger. Feel your left palm, back of the hand, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, armpit, right waist, hip, left thigh, kneecap, calf, ankle, heel, sole of the left foot, the top of the foot, big toe, second toe, third toe, forth toe, little toe. *[Slight pause]*

Now feel your back, starting with the right shoulder blade, left shoulder blade, right buttock, left buttock, the spine, the whole back all at once. *[Slight pause]*

Now feel the top of your head, forehead, both sides of the head, right temple, left temple, right eyebrow, left eyebrow, the space between the eyebrows, right eyelid, left eyelid, right eye, left eye, right ear, left ear, right cheek, left cheek, nose, tip of the nose, upper lip, lower lip, chin, throat, right chest, left chest, middle of the chest, navel, the whole abdomen.

Now feel the entire right leg, the entire left leg, both legs together. *[Slight pause]*

Feel the entire right arm, the entire left arm, both arms together. *[Slight pause]*

Feel the entire back, both buttocks, spine, shoulder blades . . . the entire front, abdomen, chest, the entire back and front together . . . the whole head . . . the entire body from top to toe . . . the entire body . . . the entire body.

[Speaking more slowly now] Again, feel the entire back, both buttocks, spine, shoulder blades . . . the entire front, abdomen, chest, the entire back and front together . . . the whole head . . . the entire body from top to toe . . . the entire body . . . the entire body . . . Do not fall asleep.

[Speaking very slowly now] Feel your entire body . . . feel your entire body . . . feel your entire body. . . . Do not fall asleep. Do not fall asleep. Stay aware and mindful. *[Pause]*

Visualize your body lying perfectly still on the floor in this room. Visualize your body. *[Longer pause]*

Become aware of your breath . . . Feel the flow of your breath as it enters and leaves your nose . . . Allow your breath to flow naturally . . . You are not doing anything. You are simply observing and feeling your breath. *[Pause]*

Feel your navel rising and falling in rhythm with your breathing . . . Stay awake and aware . . . Do not fall asleep . . . Feel your navel rising and falling. *[Longer pause]*

Now start counting your breaths backward from 27 to 1. Mentally say to yourself "27 navel rising," "26 navel falling," "25 navel rising," and so on. *[Pause]*

If you lose count, start again at 27. *[Longer pause]*

Stay awake and aware . . . Do not fall asleep . . . Keep on counting your breaths. *[Long pause]*

[For a longer session, do the same counting by focusing on the chest movements, then the throat, and finally the nostrils.]

Now stop counting and feel your entire body . . . which is deeply relaxed. *[Pause]*

Do not fall asleep. Stay awake and aware. *[Pause]*

Now feel and visualize the following things: A burning candle . . . a burning candle . . . a burning candle . . . an endless desert . . . an endless desert . . . an endless desert . . . an Egyptian pyramid . . . an Egyptian pyramid . . . an Egyptian pyramid . . . torrential rain . . . torrential rain . . . torrential rain . . . snow-capped mountains . . . snow-capped mountains . . . snow-capped mountains . . . a temple at sunrise . . . a temple at sunrise . . . a temple at sunrise . . . a coffin next to a grave . . . a coffin next to a grave . . . a coffin next to a grave . . . birds flying across a sunset . . . birds flying across a sunset . . . birds flying across a sunset . . . red clouds drifting . . . red clouds drifting . . . red clouds drifting . . . a cross above a church . . . a cross above a church . . . a cross above a church . . . stars at night . . . stars at night . . . stars at night . . . full moon . . . full moon . . . full moon . . . a smiling Buddha . . . a smiling Buddha . . . a smiling Buddha . . . wind from the sea . . . wind from the sea . . . wind from the sea . . . waves breaking on a deserted beach . . . waves breaking on a deserted beach . . . waves breaking on a deserted beach . . . waves breaking on a deserted beach . . . the eternally restless ocean . . . the eternally restless ocean . . . the eternally restless ocean . . . waves breaking on a deserted beach. *[Long pause]*

Now repeat the resolution, or *samkalpa,* you made at the beginning of this practice three times . . . Repeat your resolution three times with full awareness and conviction. *[Pause]*

Become aware of your breathing . . . become aware of your breathing. Feel your entire body . . . Your whole body is deeply relaxed . . . Feel your whole body from top to toe. *[Pause]*

Mentally recite *ommmmm . . . ommmmm . . . ommmmm.*

Become aware of the floor beneath your body. Feel the contact between your body and the floor . . . Now become aware of your surroundings . . . Lie quietly for some time while keeping your eyes closed. *[Pause]*

Now reintegrate with the outside world. Gently stretch your limbs . . . Don't rush . . . When you feel wide awake and alert, open your eyes and sit up slowly.

In yoga nidra the subconscious mind is tapped, much as crude oil is brought to the surface of an oil well. Previously suppressed material, which is the source of psychic pain and aberrant behaviour, is permitted to rise spontaneously into awareness, where it can be relived and reintegrated into the conscious personality.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati, *Yoga Nidra,* p. 196

For Reflection

1. Do you believe in the existence of a nonmaterial dimension of the world, which somehow influences the material dimension? If so, on what do you base your belief? If not, why not? Do you think there is incontrovertible evidence for the existence of a subtle realm or realms, which would turn a mere belief into knowledge? Are you satisfied with intuitive knowledge in this matter?

2. Assuming you believe in the existence of a nonmaterial dimension populated by discarnate beings (spirits), how do you react when someone challenges or ridicules your belief? Do you become upset or defensive? Do you try to convince the other person come what may? Or do you stay cool and allow the other person to entertain his or her own opinion? Or do you studiously avoid any conversation about metaphysics?

3. Do you agree with the British mathematician-philosopher Alfred North Whitehead that "knowledge shrinks as wisdom grows"? Or would you argue that as wisdom grows, we also gain better knowledge? What is the relationship between knowledge and wisdom?

4. Do you think that Yoga's traditional claims for the paranormal abilities of Yoga masters are exaggerated or merely symbolic? Or do you concede that there may well be some truth to them? If *yogins* were to indulge in myth-making as far as their own paranormal abilities are concerned, what would this say about the rest of their knowledge? Do you think they could be prone to confabulation while at the same time demonstrating remarkable integrity and wisdom in all other matters? Or could they simply be mistaken? Would Patanjali, for instance, have given paranormal abilities so much space in his *Yoga-Sūtra* if he did not believe such abilities were founded in reality?

5. Do you think that a Yoga practitioner should always cultivate his or her critical faculties in order to reduce the possibility of succumbing to self-delusion? Or do you favor a more right-brained approach, trusting that intuition will lead one to the right answers? In other words, what place should reason have in one's Yoga practice?

6. If, in a state of deep meditation, you were to have a very vivid vision of Shiva, would you automatically assume that the vision was entirely subjective or that you were granted a visit by that deity himself? What would your answer be if Shiva were to talk to you during that vision? What if he were to your head and cause you to experience an ecstatic state?

Continued on next page

"For Reflection" continued

7. If you had a vivid vision of a master unknown to you and you would subsequently find an image of him, would you automatically assume that the vision was a real visitation, or would you cautiously assume that it was a curious subjective experience with absolutely no objective basis to it? In other words, what would it take for you to believe that a vision would be more than a fabrication of your own mind?

8. How is Patanjali's insight that we normally fuse (or confuse) idea, object, and word relevant to your daily life? For instance, on a quiet side street, someone carrying a hammer is walking toward you. Would you look at that individual thinking, "Oh here is someone who borrowed a friend's hammer and is now going back to his apartment to repair a door"? Or would you think, "O dear! A mugger who wants to hurt me"? In both reactions, the hammer is the same object. In the first case, however, you have the idea that the hammer is just a tool, while in the latter case, you make the assumption that it is a weapon. You might even tell a nearby policeman that you saw a man carrying a weapon. If Patanjali is correct, and knowledge is based on a fusion (*samkara*) of idea, object, and label, then how likely is it that such fusion leads to confusion in your own life and that of other people?

9. Adepts of various traditions seem to be able to read "signs," that is, they can look at something and see it as indicative of something else. Thus, a shaman might look at the clouds and be able to predict the arrival of a guest. Or a *yogin* might look at someone's face and correctly predict that person's future. What have you noticed about your own mind's predictive capacity? Often people do not pay attention to signs and omens, but they do play a role in our lives nonetheless (and I am not referring to mere superstitious beliefs).

10. Do you like to sleep or do you find sleep a waste of your time? Do you tend to wake up feeling tired and tense or generally refreshed and in good spirits? Do you consider sleep as an opportunity to tap into the hidden aspects of your mind or do you prefer to just "conk out"? Since starting your Yoga practice, have you noticed a qualitative change in your dreaming? What do you dream about most often? Have you ever found the contents of your dreams to be helpful to you in your waking life? Or do you tend to disregard your dreams or not even remember them?

11. Are you inclined to make conscious use of your willpower? Or do you prefer to let things happen as they may? In other words, do you like to work with conscious affirmations and goals? Or do you find this kind of approach "artificial"? If the latter, how do you propose to tap into your own Unconscious and make positive changes in your attitudes and behavior?

QUESTIONNAIRE 13

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this manual.)

1. What is the meaning of *sākshātkarana*? *(Check one)*

(a) sensory inhibition
(b) Self-realization
(c) sensory perception
(d) direct perception

2. What does Patanjali's refer to when he states that the paranormal abilities are obstacles to ecstasy? *(Check one)*

(a) the *prātibhas*
(b) the *ashta-siddhis*
(c) the *vibhūtis*
(d) the *vrittis*

3. What is *atala*? *(Check one)*

(a) a paranormal power
(b) a divine manifestation
(c) a sensory modality
(d) a level of subtle existence

4. What is the literal meaning of the term *vibhūti*? *(Check one)*

(a) "power"
(b) "elemental power"
(c) "manifestation"
(d) "arrangement"

5. What is the Sanskrit term for "perfection"?

(a) *vyūha*
(b) *siddha*
(c) *kaivalya*
(d) *siddhi*

6. What is the Sanskrit term for the prānic current associated with the abdomen? ***(Check one)***

(a) *upaprāna*
(b) *avaprāna*
(c) *sumāna*
(d) *samāna*

7. What is the Sanskrit term for "resolve/resolution"? ***(Check one)***

(a) *samkalpa*
(b) *samyama*
(c) *samnyāsa*
(d) *samyoga*

8. What does the term *ākāsha* refer to? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) the spiritual heart
(b) a meditation locus
(c) ether
(d) space

9. What is the Sanskrit term for the "fourth" state of consciousness? ***(Check one or more)***

(a) *caturtha*
(b) *catur-avasthā*
(c) *turīya*
(d) *sushupti*

10. Is the "fourth state" identical with the transcendental Self or should it be considered as a state of consciousness prior to full enlightenment? ***(One sentence)***

11. Which paranormal ability is involved when a *yogin* recollects his former lives? ***(One sentence)***

12. In what way can the heart to be said to be central to spiritual life? ***(Three or more sentences)***

13. Is sensory inhibition (*pratyāhāra*) necessary for liberation? ***(Three or more sentences)***

14. If *purusha* is utterly transcendental, how is *purusha-jnāna* possible? ***(Three or more sentences)***

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 14
Imploding the Mind in Conscious Ecstasy

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To comprehend the advanced yogic practice of samādhi (ecstasy) and to learn the processes by which you can inch toward this experience*

- Subjective Mind, Objective World
- The Ecstatic Consciousness
- The Path Toward Suberconscious Ecstasy
- Seeing Ecstasy Correctly
- Ecstatic Constraint: Inner Limbs, Outer Limbs
- Samādhi: Some Historical Glimpses
- Deep Sleep and Samādhi According to Vedānta
- Ecstasy: Ekstasis
- Understanding Ecstasy
- Spontaneous Experiences of Samādhi
- From Empathy to Ecstasy
- Fleeting Samādhi
- Patanjali's Ladder of Samādhi States
- Conscious (Cognitive) Ecstasy
- The Identity Game
- Four or Eight Types of Conscious Ecstasy?
- Blissful Ecstasy
- Ultrareflective Ecstasy
- Yogic Samādhi, Trance, and Mystical Intuition
- The Three Objects of Samāpatti
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Who Am I?
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 14

SUBJECTIVE MIND, OBJECTIVE WORLD

Our "normal" state of consciousness tells us that we are "in here" and the world is "out there." But, in actuality, things are a lot more complicated than this naïve sense-based realism suggests. The debate of whether or not an external world actually exists has occupied generations of philosophers. The idealist camp denies that there are objects outside the mind, while the realists insist that table and chairs have a place outside the human mind. It is an undeniable fact that the world we know comes to us through our senses. All we can claim is that we have certain sense data, but we can say nothing really about the relationship between those sense data and an actual world "out there." Yet, in our (unphilosophical) everyday mode of existence, we simply assume that the data fed to us by our senses reflect to us an actual external world. As a matter of fact, for all practical purposes we equate our sense data with that external world.

It is, however, also true that whatever the ontological status of the world might be—that is, whether or not it exists independent of the mind—our perceptions are always tinged by the concepts and preconceptions we hold in our mind. In phenomenological language, we "constitute," or interpret, the objects we perceive. This peculiar habit breaks down only in the state of ecstasy, the eighth limb of Patanjali's eight-limbed yogic path to which the present Lesson is dedicated.

THE ECSTATIC CONSCIOUSNESS

All spiritual traditions are familiar with a state of mind in which ordinary thought and sense perception is lifted and which is characterized by a merging of subject and object. In Yoga, this peculiar state is generally known as *samādhi,* which Patanjali defines as follows.

samādhi

3.3: TAD-EVA-ARTHA-MĀTRA-NIRBHĀSAM SVA-RŪPA-SHŪNYA IVA SAMĀDHIH

"That [meditative consciousness], [when] shining forth as the object only as if empty of [its] essence, is ecstasy."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.3 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: I have altered the rendering slightly from the one found in my book. As I mentioned before, *samādhi* is still best translated as "ecstasy" rather than Mircea Eliade's "enstasy." Please correct the spelling of *samādhi* in my book.

If the explanations proffered in my book seem too cryptic, here are some perhaps more lucid comments: When meditation is deep enough, the mind becomes completely still and alert. The mental fluctuations (*vritti*) mentioned in aphorism 1.6 are brought under control (*nirodha*) and no longer interrupt the "single flow" (*eka-tānatā*), or continuous presence, of the object of meditation (see aphorism 3.2). At an unpredictable point, there occurs a radical qualitative shift in consciousness. Suddenly the object of meditation looms so large in the meditating mind that the mind can be said to have lost its characteristic feature of being split into a subject ("I") and an object (or contents of consciousness). Now subject and object seem to be the same. That is to say, the subject (i.e., the meditating mind) has merged with the object (i.e., the meditational focus).

THE PATH TOWARD SUPERCONSCIOUS ECSTASY

Yoga has a long-range program of training by which a student will know the unconscious in order to solve the problems therein, and in order to reorganize it by various means to discharge its destructive generating power which operates against normal personality. As long as there is no change in the unconscious plane, a student of Yoga cannot have any progress. The essential part of Self-analysis is to explore the unconscious, to reorganize the conscious, and to bring them into harmony in the superconscious state [samadhi]. . .

—Rammurti S. Mishra, *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology* (London: Lyrebird Press, n.d.), p. 83

SEEING ECSTASY CORRECTLY

For the beginner, samadhi is an alluring subject. But there are reasons not to get fixated on it. The beginner can only conceive of samadhi as a glorification of the self he knows . . . Often beginners in Yoga indulge in fantasies of an easy samadhi, and there are those who are only too ready to take advantage of their gullibility . . . Samadhi has to come on its own . . . Samadhi is an experience where the existence of "I" disappears. Explanation can come only through the presence of "I". . .

—B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Life* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2005), pp. 214–215

ECSTATIC CONSTRAINT: INNER LIMBS, OUTER LIMBS

Just as concentration follows from sensory inhibition and meditation develops on the basis of concentration, so also the ecstatic state is a natural, if spontaneous, outcome of deep meditation. To capture this organic interrelationship between concentration, meditation, and ecstasy, Patanjali reserved a special technical term for the combined practice of these three mental techniques: *samyama.*

3.4: TRAYAM EKATRA SAMYAMAH

"The three [practiced] together [on the same object] are 'constraint.'"

3.7: TRAYAM ANTAR-ANGAM PŪRVEBHYAH

"[In relation] to the previous [five limbs of Yoga], the three [components of the practice of 'constraint' (*samyama*) are 'inner limbs' (*antar-anga*)."

3.8: TAD API BAHIR-ANGAM NIRBĪJASYA

"Yet they are outer members [in relation] to the seedless [ecstasy]."

- Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.4 and 3.7–3.8 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: In aphorism 3.4, the word *ekatra* means literally "in one" or "as one [sequence]." The Sanskrit word *anga,* by the way, can mean either "limb" or "member" but also "body." Here it is clearly intended in the former connotation.

The verbal root *yam* ("to restrain, control," etc. yields several important technical terms of Yoga: *yama* (moral discipline), *niyama* ([self-]restraint"), *prānāyama* (breath control, from *prāna* + *āyāma*), *yāmala* ("pair," e.g. the sacred union of Shiva and Shakti), and *yamunā* (the esoteric name for the prānic current flowing through the right nostril), and *yāman* (invocation of the deities).

3.5: TAJ-JAYĀT PRAJNĀ-ĀLOKAH

"Through mastery of that [practice of 'constraint'] [there ensues] the flashing-forth of insight."

3.6: TASYA BHŪMISHU VINIYOGAH

"Its progression is gradual."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.5–3.6 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

Each exercise in conscious ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) yields transcendental insight (*prajnā*) relative to a given meditational object. At the peak of ultrareflective ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*), ecstatic insight converts into omnipotence (*sarva-bhāva-adhishthātritva*) and omniscience (*sarva-jnātritva*), as mentioned in aphorism 3.49 (see Lesson 15). All preceding ecstatic experiences can be regarded as dress rehearsals for this supreme moment. Thus, the practice of *samyama* can be said to proceed in stages (*bhūmi*). Likewise the insights (*prajnā*) generated in those ecstasies can also be deemed progressive. By contrast, the ultimate gnostic insight (hinted at in 3.5 and also in 3.52–3.54 as well as 4.26–4.27 and 4.29—which revolves around the subtle but all-important distinction (*anyatā*) between transcendental Spirit and the *sattva* of the ecstatic mind—is instantaneous and all of a piece. As it has no particular object, this ultimate insight is different from all other insights that can be gained through ecstatic identification with objects.

Vyāsa explains in his *Yoga-Bhāshya* (3.6) that the ecstatic states must be cultivated gradually in order to achieve complete mastery. That is to say, the adept must go through the progression of cogitative, ultracogitative, reflective and ultrareflective *samādhis.* To use a contemporary illustration, if you want to drive all the way from Mexico to Alaska, you must cross the United States and Canada. Each type of ecstatic experience represents an essential step in a long journey and gives the *yogin* the key to unlocking the next level of *samādhi* until, in the highest refinement of *nirvicāra-samādhi* the vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*) flashes forth in an instant.

By Yoga, Yoga must be known;
Yoga increases Yoga's store.
He who has given care to Yoga,
In Yoga rests forever.

—Cited in the *Yoga-Bhāshya* (3.6)

SAMĀDHI: SOME HISTORICAL GLIMPSES

by Georg Feuerstein

The earliest mention of *samādhi* is in the Buddhist Pali canon, where it stands for "concentration." Buddhist authorities define it as "one-pointedness of the mind" (*cittasya ekāgratā*; see, e.g., Buddhaghosa's *Attha-Sālinī* 118). This is not, however, the sporadic concentration of the conventional mind, but the creative yogic process of abstracting attention from external objects and focusing it upon a specific inner prop.

Possibly slightly later than the Buddhist references is the mention of *samādhi* in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (2.44, 53, 54) in the sense of one-pointedness as communion with the Divine Being (i.e., Krishna). This ecstatic and transformative experience of the Divine is said to be fostered through strict meditational practices (see, e.g., 6.12–15), but also through disinterested action (see, e.g., 12.10) and simple devotion to the personal God (see, e.g., 12.11).

Several hundred years later, the term *samādhi* is used in the *Maitrāyanīya-Upanishad* (6.18) as the final "limb" of a six-limbed path (*shad-anga-yoga*), which also includes breath control, sensory inhibition, meditation, concentration, and reasoning (*tarka*)—in this particular order. This yogic path is said to lead to the realization of the "gold-colored Maker, the Lord, the Purusha, the source of Brahma." It "unifies" (*ekī-karoti*) everything.

Prior to the above usages, we find the past participle *samāhita* ("collected") employed in reference to mental concentration (see, e.g., *Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 4.4.23). Most commonly, the inner yogic process, including the ecstatic state itself, is referred to as meditation (*dhyāna*).

As "perfect concentration" (*samyak-samādhi*), the term figures in Hīnayāna Buddhism as the last limb of the Eightfold Path of the Buddha. As such it comprises all the techniques of meditative introversion known as *dhyāna* (Pali: *jhāna*), of which eight stages of progressive simplification of the contents of consciousness are distinguished. The first four stages pertain to the category of "meditation with form" (*rūpa-dhyāna*), the last four to that of "formless meditation" (*arūpa-dhyāna*). Beyond these mystical realizations lies the unconditional, transcendental Reality, *nirvāna*.

The most elaborate metapsychology of *samādhi* states, modeled in part on the Buddhist schema, is found in the literature of Classical Yoga. According to the *Yoga-Sūtra* (2.11), *samādhi* ensues when the five types of fluctuations (*vritti*)—perceptual or inferred knowledge, error, conceptualization, sleep, and memory—are perfectly suspended in meditation. That control (*nirodha*) is achieved by means of sensory inhibition (*pratyāhāra*), concentration (*dhāranā*), and meditation (*dhyāna*). That state of control, however, is only a sufficient, not a necessary, condition for the occurrence of the ecstatic consciousness (grace motif).

In Classical Yoga, *samādhi* designates the *technique* of mystical identification with the intended object, whereas the underlying *process* is more properly expressed by the term *samāpatti*

Continued on next page

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("coincidence"), which is reserved in Buddhism for the four states of formless meditation. Similarly, the expressions *dhāranā* and *dhyāna* represent types of yogic technique, while their essential processes are more accurately referred to as *ekāgratā* ("one-pointedness") and *ekatānatā* ("one-flowingness"), respectively.

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Eliade, Mircea. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2d ed. 1969. (There are several relevant sections in this standard work on Yoga; see especially pages 76ff. and 167ff.)

Feuerstein, Georg. *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1980. (The different stages of ecstatic unification are given a fresh examination, especially on pages 81ff.)

Koelman, Gaspar M. *Pātañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*. Poona: Papal Athaeneum, 1970. (The ecstatic state is given careful attention on the basis of the commentarial literature on the *Yoga-Sūtra*, especially on pages 187ff.)

DEEP SLEEP AND SAMĀDHI ACCORDING TO VEDĀNTA

According to the nondualist tradition of India, which goes by the name of Vedānta, during sleep the mind enters naturally into a state of deepest meditation in which we are in touch with our true nature, the Self (*ātman*). In light of this, Swami Niranjanananda could write:

> *Nidra,* or deep sleep, is the first state of samadhi, which is experienced every night when we sleep. In reference to the deep sleep state St. John of the Cross said, "I swear by God I die every night." In the state of deep sleep, there is an absence of time, space and object. Human beings are accustomed to living in the dimension of time, space and object. In the dimension where there is no experience of time, space and object, there is no human experience.
>
> In the dreaming phase of sleep there is human experience, but in deep sleep there is nothing, no experience at all. The Yoga Upanishads state that in sleep all the external or manifest faculties of the self identify themselves with the higher self, and that state is similar to the samadhi experience. (*Yoga Darshana: Vision of the Yoga Upanishads,* p. 204)

Alas, deep sleep is only *similar* to the *samādhi* state, for it lacks the acute nonegoic awareness that is present in the ecstatic condition. While deep sleep is governed by *tamas, samādhi* has a preponderance of *sattva,* which is why ecstasy is moving the mind toward liberation and sleep is not.

ECSTASY: EKSTASIS

The Greek form of "ecstasy" is *ekstasis—εκστασις*—meaning literally "standing out(side)." It generally denotes a mental state of extreme emotionality or a state in which one is outside one's normal consciousness. Ecstasy is typically understood to be a trancelike condition of euphoria accompanied by visions or hallucinations. Unlike the hypnotic state, however, there is conscious awareness in the ecstatic condition.

Because of the features commonly associated with ecstasy, the famous historian of religion Mircea Eliade coined the neologism *enstasy* to best describe the yogic *samādhi*, which is not a form of trance and in which one rests in oneself rather than takes flight from oneself. But his coinage never became popular, and most writers on Yoga, myself included, continue to translate *samādhi* as "ecstasy." The following table shows the important differences between what is conventionally thought to be religious *ecstasy* and *samādhi.*

Typical Religious Ecstasy	Yogic Samādhi
1. spontaneously occurring (or, in the case of Shamanism, often by artificial means)	1. induced by careful and prolonged mental training (*sādhana*)
2. a high degree of emotional excitation	2. basic tranquility
3. sense of separation from the body	3. centeredness
4. strong ideological coloring	4. largely independent of belief system
5. can be draining on the individual	5. an energizing experience
6. intended for religious purposes other than liberation	6. intended for liberation

Upon closer examination of the mystical literature of diverse religious traditions, however, it becomes apparent that not all religious ecstasies fit the above criteria and that some are distinctly similar to yogic *samādhi* experiences. Thus, some Christian mystics have experienced a wide range of ecstatic states, including those that within the Yoga tradition would be classified as belonging to the category of

At this point, please pause for a few minutes and reflect on the above before proceeding. Don't rush through the course! Make your studying a yogic practice.

"supraconscious ecstasy," or *asamprajnāta-samādhi.* However, the yogic ideal of liberation does not seem to be part of Christian spirituality, which is essentially theistic and assumes an unbridgeable gulf between the Creator and his creatures. Even a sophisticated mystical theologian like the German Meister Eckhart could not avail himself of the neutral language of liberation.

UNDERSTANDING ECSTASY

Wrong views about the *samādhi* state abound. The following sampling of opinions shows a profound ignorance of the actual features of this type of experience:

1. that it is unconscious (a popular view among psychoanalysts in particular)
2. that it is a hypnotic condition
3. that it involves a reduction of intellectual acuity
4. that it is a form of spirit possession
5. that it is identical with, or equivalent to, drug-induced states of consciousness (the view of many New Agers)
6. that it involves heightened emotionality
7. that it is a visionary experience
8. that it does not transform the person

I propose to respond to each of the above seven erroneous assumptions.

First, anyone who has experienced *samādhi* is bound to describe this state as one of utter consciousness rather than unconsciousness. Some Yoga masters have even spoken of it as a state of superconsciousness. Speaking from personal experience, Swami Niranjanananda of the Bihar School of Yoga writes that in *samādhi,* "the mind is taken . . . into a state where there is total, continual, constant awareness" (*Yoga Darshana,* p. 206). This notion caused C. G. Jung considerable intellectual difficulty, as is evident from the following remark, which can be found in his work *The Integration of the Personality*:

> One hopes to dominate the unconscious, but the past masters of this art of domination—the yogis—wind up with samadhi, an ecstatic condition they seems to be equivalent to an unconscious state. The fact that they call our unconscious the universal consciousness, does not change things in the least: in their case the unconscioius has devoured the ego-consciousness. They do not realize that a "universal" consciousness is a contradiction in terms, since exclusiveness, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of all that can claim the name of consciousness.
>
> A "universal" consciousness is logically identical with unconsciousness. It is true that an accurate application of the methods of the Pali-canon, or of the Yogasutra, produces a remarkable extension of consciousness. But the contents of consciouisness lose in clear-

ness of detail with increasing extension. In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim, with an infinite multitude of objects merging into an indistinct totality—a state in which the subjective and objective are almost completely identical. This is all very well, but scarcely to be recommended anywhere north of the Tropic of Cancer. (p. 26)

Segment of Bernini's marble sculpture "Ecstasy of St. Teresa" (1647–1652)

Jung's view was vehemently criticized by the Jungian therapist Hans Jacobs in his *Western Psychotherapy and Hindu Sâdhanâ,* where he counters Jung's criticism as follows:

Dimness is a characteristic of the parts as long as they are not integrated into the whole. It is such an integration which the yogin has made his aim; hence he withdraws his attention from his person and turns it towards the whole . . . [E]ither the ideas on which Yoga is based are universally true or they belong to the relative order of things and are conditioned by time and space. The latter position would be disowned by all the scriptures that have set forth these teachings. Consequently, the one legitimate question would be whether those doctrines, which form an inseparable unity, are true or false. But in all these controversies Jung has not entered into this problem for a single moment. (p.166)

Writing in 1934 and coming from the perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis, Geraldine Coster echoed Jung's opinion that traditional Yoga is an essentially Eastern practice that is unsuitable for Westerners. Yet, she was willing to concede that the knowledge contained in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* is "universally true" and therefore should be investigated and used "with infinite advantage" (p. 244). As she put it:

My plea is then that yoga as followed in the east is a practical method of mind development, quite as practical as analytical therapy, and far more practical and closely related to real life than the average university course. Furthermore, I am convinced that the yoga sutras of Patanjali do really contain the information that some of the most advanced psychotherapists of the present day are ardently seeking. That there is a crying need in the west for something parallel to this eastern yoga many to-day would admit. The difficulty is to adapt the method to current needs without cheapening the subtleties of real introspective experience on the one hand, or losing its practical value in a maze of pseudo-mysticism on the other. This difficulty should not however be an insuperable one. The key to the problem lies in a sympathetic appreciation of the eastern approach to the problems of the interior life. As I have said, this approach is neither atheistic nor superstitious; it is scientific and based upon actual experiment. . .

> From my personal experience, small and fragmentary though it be, I am certain that there is a region beyond that painted drop-scene which forms for so many the boundary of this life; and that it is penetrable and susceptible of exploration by those who are sufficiently determined. The path to spiritual reality lies through mental and emotional awareness, and the attainment of this awareness is one of the most subtly difficult and absorbingly worth-while adventures that a human being can undertake . . . I would once more reiterate that extension and intensification of consciousness are attainable by the individual who is prepared to pay the price of achieving self-awareness, and that no price is too great to pay for that attainment. (*Yoga and Western Psychology,* pp. 245–248)

Since Coster penned the above comments, our understanding of Yoga theory and practice has definitely deepened. Also, a number of Western practitioners of this age-old tradition (particularly in its Buddhist form) have demonstrated that Yoga can be practiced successfully by Westerners. It is true, however, that *most* Western or contemporary practitioners of Yoga are interested only in its postural techniques and completely ignore its authentic core as a liberation teaching. Thus, there is not even a "sympathetic appreciation of the eastern approach." Needless to say, any shallow approach to Yoga will never lead into the potent realm of deep meditation, never mind ecstasy.

The second erroneous view, namely that *samādhi* is a hypnotic trance state, is contradicted by the classical descriptions themselves. As is clear from statements in the *Mahābhārata* epic, the *yogins* have long been aware of the phenomenon of hypnosis and distinguish it from the ecstatic state. There is no diminished or narrowed awareness in *samādhi,* as is the case with hypnosis. This mistaken view was originally championed by early Western physicians and psychoanalysts commenting on Yoga, and has frequently been challenged since then.

Third, *samādhi* does not turn a person into a zombie or intellectual dullard. Some of the finest minds of India were accomplished masters of Yoga: Shankara, Abhinava Gupta, Vijnāna Bhikshu, Gautama Buddha, Nāgārjuna, Atīsha, Gampopa, Tsongkhapa, Hemacandra, Haribhadra Sūrī. If anything, success on the advanced stages of the yogic path depends on a high degree of discernment (*viveka*).

Fourth, the charge that *samādhi* amounts to spirit possession, is too ridiculous to refute in any detail. Let is suffice to say that the state of yogic ecstasy is the one mental condition in which one is *not* possessed by anyone or anything. The *yogin* stands firmly within himself (that "self" being his essential nature beyond the confining ego).

The fifth claim, namely that *samādhi* is identical with or at least equivalent to drug-induced altered states, is rather misleading. Yoga masters who, to satisfy the curiosity of their disciples, agreed to take synthetically manufactured psychotropic substances like LSD were amused that anyone should think that these substances could produce more than a pale imitation of genuine ecstasy. What is more, they were able, at will, to suppress the particular effects caused by those drugs. Even if it were possible to attain *samādhi* by ingesting certain drugs or herbal concoctions, as some Yoga adepts claim, the resultant

state would not have the long-term transformative effect that is associated with *samādhi* achieved by regular spiritual practice. The reason for this is quite simply that a surreptitiously attained ecstatic state would be "out of place" and not have behind it the momentum gained from a *yogin's* systematic mental and moral endeavors. Under normal circumstances, *samādhi* is the fruit of *sādhana* and therefore can also be expected to promote the experiencer's spiritual efforts.

It is also untrue, the sixth erroneous view, that *samādhi* entails heightened emotionality. On the contrary, this state is generally based on a profound disposition of equanimity, or tranquillity. There are, however, certain special states known in the Bhakti-Yoga tradition, which correspond to religious ecstasies that are characterized by an exuberant mood of love or devotion. These highly emotive states (*bhāva*) are frequently also called *samādhi.*

The seventh wrong view, which confuses *samādhi* with a visionary state, presumably arises from equating *samādhi* with religious ecstasy where visions and auditions are often accompanying phenomena. Yogic ecstasy, however, is a state in which mental activity is brought under control (*nirodha*). The type of direct knowledge (*prajnā*) involved in cognitive forms of *samādhi* is based on identification with the object of meditation. Visions and auditions, by contrast, entail separation between subject and object.

SPONTANEOUS EXPERIENCES OF SAMĀDHI

There is no way of telling (unless one happens to be a Yoga master with clairvoyant abilities) when *samādhi* will occur on the spiritual path. Thus, at least at the outset, the experience is always unpredictable or spontaneous. With regular practice of *samādhi,* however, this state becomes less elusive and more predictable. In other words, entering into the ecstatic state can be learned!

Then there are those cases where *samādhi* happens as a total surprise, without any apparent preparation. I say *apparent,* because, of course, from a yogic point of view, the experiencing individual is merely reaping the reward from his or her spiritual efforts made in a previous life. Most often, such spontaneous *samādhis* occur in or shortly after moments of personal crisis or when the individual is in a particularly relaxed and calm mood. Typically, the experience leaves an indelible mark on the person's mind: He or she might become more thoughtful and philosophical or kind and understanding toward others. Sometimes this kind of spontaneous experience causes a veritable inner

revolution, which prompts the person to search frantically for answers to the Big Questions and experiment with this or that spiritual practice or approach. Sometimes, however, the experience is so disconnected from the person's ordinary life that he or she becomes anxious and prefers to ignore and forget it. In such cases, the *samādhi* experience is unlikely to have an obvious lasting effect.

FROM EMPATHY TO ECSTASY

The essential feature of *samādhi* is the identification of the mind with the object of meditation. Identification is also at the core of the mental state of empathy. Whereas the former can be qualified as *cognitive identification,* the latter is of the nature of *affective identification*. As abilities of the mind, however, both states share much common ground and perhaps can be regarded as occupying opposite ends of the same operational spectrum. Thus, one could say that both *samādhi* and empathy are mental states in which the person transcends the typical egoic consciousness, which is tied to one's "own" body-mind. In empathy, we "reach out" to another being identifying with it through our feeling capacity. In *samādhi*, we "enter" the object of meditation so completely that we are one with it. In both instances, we are engaging a process that is not merely cognitive or affective but involves both psychic capacities. At the same time, according to Yoga metaphysics, our identification is not merely ideational (that is, imaginative or imaginary) but also *ontological.* We *participate* in the being of that with which we identify or empathize. This participation happens at a deeper level than the physical body.

Photographic simulation

In the ecstatic state, we actually *become* the object, again at a deeper ontological level. We are occupying, as it were, the object from the inside, and thus become able to experience its interiority exactly: We come to know what it is like to be a brickwall, a bird, a star like our own Sun, or the universe as a whole. Would a brickwall know that it is being ecstatically "occupied"? Since a brickwall lacks an individuated organ of consciousness, the answer must be No. Would a human being know? Not necessarily; it depends on whether or not the adept *intends* for his or her ecstatic identification with a given person to be known to that person or to serve as an initiatory force in that person's life. That is to say, it depends on the level at which ecstatic identification occurs.

Apart from being morally desirable, the practice of empathy in daily life is a good dress rehearsal for the ecstatic state. Besides, the ecstatic experience must always be integrated with one's life in the world, as otherwise it remains a specialized skill that is unlikely to lead to liberation.

Can an adept induce the state of *samādhi* in another person? Absolutely. I once witnessed an adept

do so with one of my cats. For several minutes, her eyes changed from green to a luminous white, and she sat stockstill. Unfortunately, however, the experience did not change my cat's ornery character, as had been intended. She continued to be her mostly stand-offish self. The psychic ground for a lasting transformation had not been laid for the experience to take root.

FLEETING SAMĀDHI

kshana-samādhi

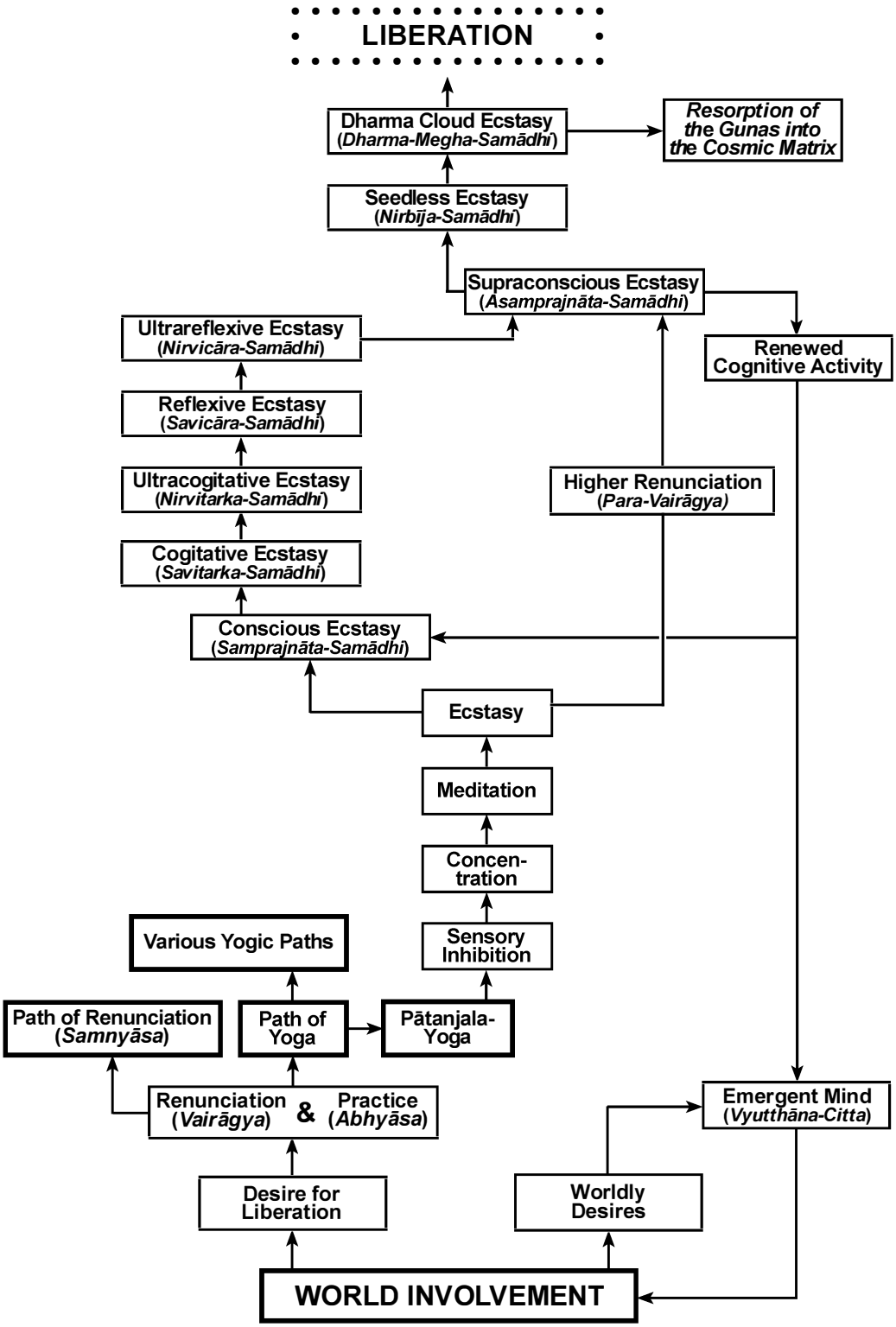
To make the point that *samādhi* is a natural state and that there is continuity between immanence and transcendence, the adepts of Kashmir's Shaiva tradition invented the concept of *kshana-samādhi,* or momentary ecstasy, which happens naturally in the space between thoughts where pure Awareness resides. This teaching can be found, among other texts, in the *Tripura-Rahasya* (16.84ff.), where we can read:

> The wakeful state is iridescent with fleeting *samādhi* and sleep. Men when they are awake can detect fleeting sleep because they are already conversant with its nature.
>
> But fleeting *samādhi* goes undetected because people are not so conversant with it. O Brahmin! Fleeting *samādhi* is indeed being experienced by all, even in their busy moments; but it passes unnoticed by them, for want of acquaintance with it. Every instant free from thoughts and musings in the wakeful state is the condition of *samādhi*.
>
> *Samādhi* is simply absence of thoughts. Such a state prevails in sleep and at odd moments of wakefulness.*

The advantage of thinking of the gaps between thoughts as a form of *samādhi* is this: We can learn to appreciate that every moment in our waking life is an opportunity to realize our spiritual core, to put ourselves in the driver seat of Spirit so to speak. Pure Awareness is not a special state of consciousness, but the transcendental foundation of all possible mental states. It is present without interruption and therefore is available to us all the time, whatever we may be engaged in. This certainty is one of the secrets of the Yoga masters. Hence they can have a conversation, plant a tree, or watch television and never be trapped in separative consciousness. Upon enlightenment, there is continuous *samādhi* in the waking state. This is the grand accomplishment of *sahaja-samādhi,* or spontaneous ecstasy, as realized by great masters like Janaka in Upanishadic times: He ruled a kingdom and yet was what the *Bhagavad-Gītā* calls a sage whose wisdom is firmly established (*sthita-prajnā).*

*This translation is by Swami Sri Ramanananda Saraswathi (formerly Sri Munagala S. Venkataramaiah). I have made some nonessential changes to the text. © Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. South India. 5th ed. 1989, repr. 1994. A full rendering of the Tripura-Rahasya can be found online at *http://sss.vn.ua/tripura1.htm.* This scripture was one of Sri Ramana Maharshi's favorite texts, and he liked to quote from it.

PATANJALI'S LADDER OF SAMĀDHI STATES



CONSCIOUS (COGNITIVE) ECSTASY

samprajnāta

savikalpa

The most common form of yogic ecstasy is what Patanjali calls "conscious" or "cognitive" ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*), which in the Vedānta tradition is known as "conceptual" ecstasy (*savikalpa-samādhi*).

The term *samprajnāta* is composed of the prefix *sam* (equivalent to Latin *com* and Greek *syn*), the word *prajnā* (standing for "[higher] knowledge" or "understanding"), and the suffix *ta*, and means literally "conscious," "cognitive," or "with knowledge." *Savikalpa,* again, is composed of the prefix *sa* ("with") and the word *vikalpa* (standing for "notion," "alternative," "doubt," etc.). This term is often rendered as "with form" in the sense of "thought form."

Both terms hint at the essential characteristic of this type of ecstasy, which is the presence of a particular kind of mental activity vis-à-vis an object (*artha*) of meditation. In other words, here the ecstatic consciousness has a content. As we will see, there is another type of *samādhi* in which there is no conscious content (i.e., no idea or thought) and which, instead, is pure mind-transcending Awareness. Patanjali explains the former type of ecstasy in the very first chapter of his *Yoga-Sūtra* as follows:

1.17: VITARKA-VICĀRA-ĀNANDA-ASMITĀ-[RŪPA-]ANUGAMĀT SAMPRAJNĀTAH

"[The ecstasy arising out of the state of *vritti-nirodha* in meditation] is cognitive by being connected with [the forms (*rūpa*) of] cogitation, reflection, joy, or I-am-ness."

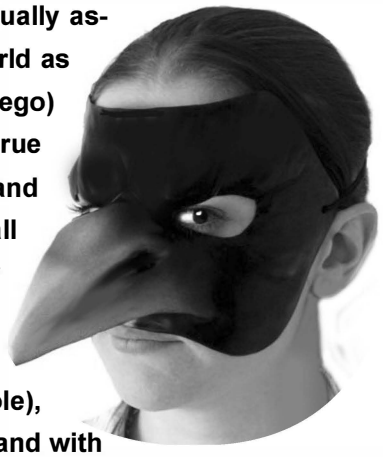
☐ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.17 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have somewhat altered the rendering from the one found in my book.

Cognitive *samādhi* refers to the discipline used to attain the highest level of yogic insight. It does not entail an escape from the phenomenal world, but a mastery over it . . . Released from its *rajasic* and *tamasic* functioning, the mind in *samādhi* is accompanied by acute 'wakefulness', overcoming the egoic limitations of consciousness.

—K. Kunjunni Raja, Preface to Ian Whicher, *Cognitive Samadhi in the Yoga Sutra-s*, n.p.

THE IDENTITY GAME



To be human means to play the "identity game": We habitually assume an identity, that is, we present ourselves in the world as a particular being. I speak of a "game," because our identity (ego) is constantly shifting depending on the occasion, while our true identity is pure Awareness (*cit*), and we know this at times and to varying degrees. We can, at least in principle, let go off all substitute (spatio-temporal) identities and be present only in our true, authentic form (which is transcendental Spirit). This situation is similar to an actor who, for the duration of a dramatic performance, assumes a particular identity (i.e., role), except we play out our substitute identies in the "real" world and with "real" consequences.

Following the theosophical Yoga writer I. K. Taimni (*Glimpses Into the Psychology of Yoga,* **pp. 133ff.), I propose that we can usefully distinguish seven types of assumed identity:**

1. *Bodily Identity:* **I am male; I am old; I am fat; I am hungry; I am sexy**
2. *Emotional Identity:* **I am happy; I am bored; I am obstinate; I am helpful**
3. *Intellectual Identity:* **I am a polyglot; I am a graduate; I am illiterate**
4. *Ethnic Identity:* **I am black; I am a Westerner; I am a Rastafarian**
5. *Cultural Identity:* **I am an American; I am an illegal immigrant; I am a Conservative; I am a Catholic; I am a secular humanist; I am a member of a commune**
6. *Social Identity:* **I am a parent; I am a teacher; I am a car salesman; I am unemployed; I am a political activist; I am a monastic**
7. *Proprietary Identity:* **I am destitute; I am a house owner; I am an investor; I am a stamp collector**

Some of our substitute identities overlap. All are associated with any number of cultural stereotypes, which only serve to reinforce these artificial identities. The more seriously we assume these identities, that is, the more we merge with them, the less we are in touch with our true Identity and the more karmic our role playing becomes. Through Yoga,

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

especially the ecstatic state, we are able to gradually dismantle our various levels of mis-identification.

The identity game arises from the mental function of "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*), which ranks high in the evolutionary sequence of ontic categories (*tattva*) within the vast realm of the Cosmos (*prakriti*). Beyond it lies the prepersonal or preindividuated higher mind (*buddhi*), and beyond that exists in eternal purity Spirit, or *purusha*, or what Taimni calls the "Monad."

To realize the spiritual Monad, the practitioner must *transcend* I-am-ness and its role playing. This is accomplished through discernment (*viveka*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*), both in the waking state and at all other levels of consciousness, including *samādhi*.

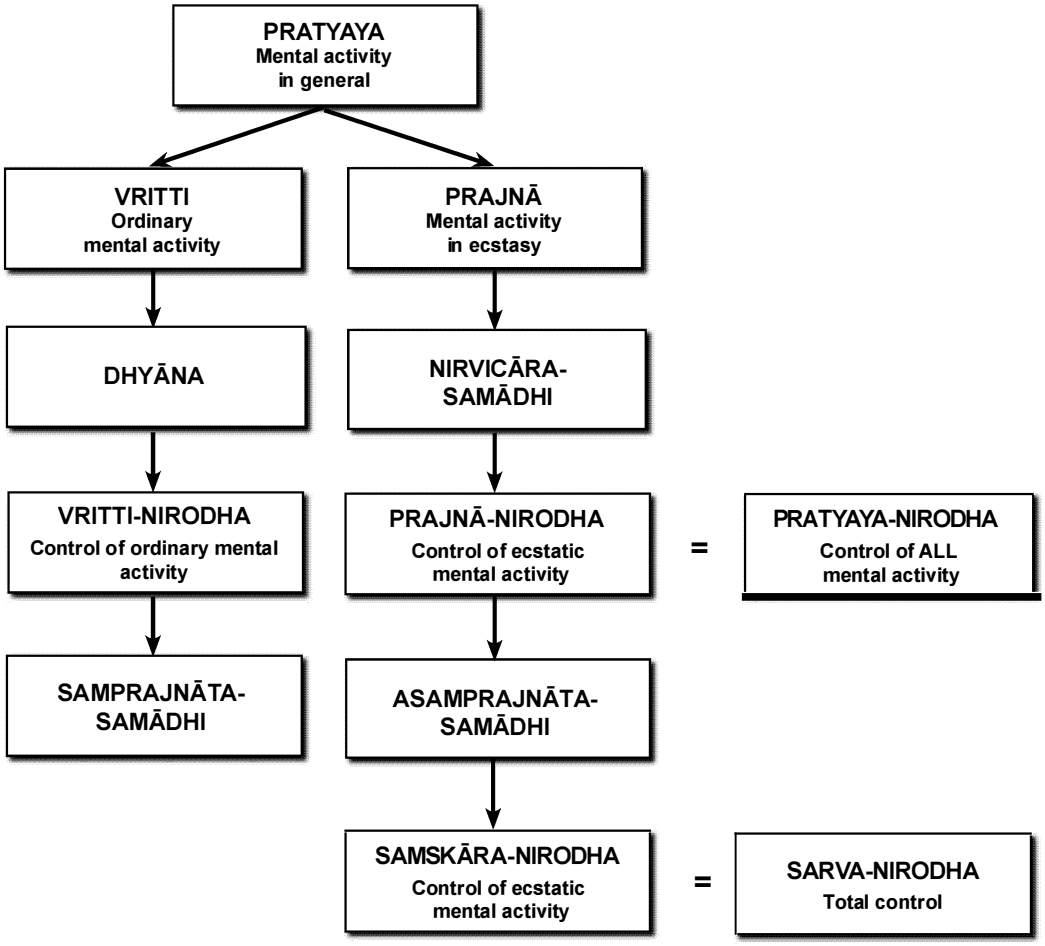
Patanjali does not characterize the *purusha* as a monadic "I" (*aham*), though he could easily have done so, as did other Yoga authorities, notably the masters of Kashmir's tradition of Shaivism. They distinguish between the "I-maker" (*ahamkāra = asmitā*), the empirical self, and the transcendental I (*aham*). If Patanjali did not go this route, it was probably because he wanted to avoid any confusion of the formless Spirit with an egoic state. He preferred to speak of "it" as "Awareness" (*cit*), "mere Awareness" (*citi-mātra*), or the "power of the Seer" (*drik-shakti*).

This transcendental Awareness is nonlocal and therefore cannot be said to have a center. It is Self-Identity, that is, it is independent (*svatantrya*) and unrelated to anything else that can be identified. Its connection (*samyoga*) with the Cosmos, as we have seen, is fictitious and effective only from the viewpoint of cosmic existence.

To dispel the fiction of Spirit's entrapment in the Cosmos, we must see through all our substitute identifications and withdraw from all cosmic role playing. This process of progressive disidentification begins the moment we stop regarding ourselves as *merely* material organisms with a brain and nervous system sophisticated enough to give rise to mental-emotional activity. In the end, we must even surrender any notion of being a practitioner on the path, or an enlightened being. Then everything falls into place as it should, and the Cosmos continues with its ceaseless self-modification, while Spirit abides in its "own form" (*sva-rūpa*), which transcends space and time, as well as all possible conceptualization. Since the sensory instruments have long been transcended, that One cannot be perceived; since the mind is also perfectly transcendend, it cannot be conceived. Spirit can only *be*.

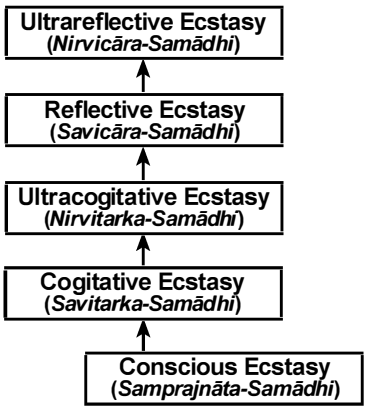
From aphorism 1.17, we can glean that conscious ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) comes in a variety of forms, or levels, depending of the mental phenomena associated with it: *vitarka, vicāra, asmitā,* and *ānanda.* These ideations are not *vrittis,* which are eliminated in meditation, but higher mental operations, which can be categorized as "insights" (*prajnā*). Both *vrittis* and *prajnās* belong to the generic category of *pratyaya,* denoting mental activity, or content. The former are somehow related to the senses, whereas the latter are not.

Upon *vritti-nirodha,* or control of the mental fluctuations, the mind implodes achieving the state of ecstatic unification. The challenge in *samādhi* is to achieve *pratyaya-nirodha,* or control of *all* mental contents, which then leads to the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*). The height of conscious ecstasy is ultrareflective ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*), which leads to the elimination of all *prajnā* phenomena in the ecstatic state. In *asamprajnāta* state, the subliminal activators are eradicated, which implies total control (*sarva-nirodha*). The following diagram might be helpful in understanding this:



Control of the *vrittis, prajnās,* and *samskāras* amounts to total control, which is the portal to liberation. Thus, Yoga proceeds by way of progressive self-control. It can be called the art and science of *nirodha.* Freedom is a matter of controlling (that is, transcending) all aspects of cosmic existence.

Before we can turn to the sublime state of supraconscious ecstasy, however, we must complete our tour through the intricacies of conscious ecstasy, or *samprajnāta-samādhi.* This form of ecstasy, mapped out with tantalizing brevity in aphorism 1.17, entails four essential aspects that, according to the Sanskrit commentarial literature on the *Yoga-Sūtra,* can also be viewed as successive levels of ecstatic subtlety. Below is the relevant portion of the diagram found on p. 315:



I have furnished an introduction to the four aspects or levels of conscious ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) elsewhere:

- Now read Chapter 20 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.
- Next read Essay #74 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

After going over the above readings, you will have the necessary theoretical framework for examining Patanjali's aphorisms dealing with conscious ecstasy more closely.

1.41: KSHĪNA-VRITTER ABHIJĀTASYA IVA MANER GRAHĪTRI-GRAHANA-GRĀHYESHU TAT-STHA-TAD-ANJANATĀ SAMĀPATTIH

"[In the case of a mind whose] fluctuations have dwindled [and which has become] like a transparent crystal, [there results]—[with reference to] 'grasper', 'grasping', and 'grasped'—[a state of] coincidence with that on which [the mind] abides and by which [it is] 'anointed'."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.41 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

  NOTE: I have slightly altered the rendering from the one found in my book to make the translation more readable. The only significant change is the translation of *mani* as "crystal" rather than "jewel."

Samāpatti is to the ecstatic state what *ekāgratā* is to concentration and *ekatānatā* is to meditation. In other words, this technical term describes the essential process underlying the yogic technique of *samādhi* and is frequently used as a synonym of *samādhi.*

James Houghton Woods, in his 1914 academic rendering of the *Yoga-Sūtra* along with the commentaries of Vyāsa and Vācaspati Mishra, chose to translate the technical term *samāpatti* as "balanced-state." This fails to convey the essential function of this type of ecstasy, which is that of identification with the object of meditation. *Samāpatti* is composed of the prefixes *sam* + *ā* and the verbal root *pat* ("to fall") followed by the feminine suffix *ti,* which denotes "falling together" or "coinciding." It corresponds to the Greek word *symballein,* from which, incidentally, our English word "symbol" is formed. But there is nothing symbolic about the ecstatic process, which, rather, is a literal mind-melt with the contemplated object. Another good term for conveying the meaning of *samāpatti* in English is "coalescence," as used, for instance, by Chip Hartranft in his rendering of Patanjali's work.

1.42: TATRA SHABDA-ARTHA-JNĀNA-VIKALPAIH SAMKĪRNĀ SAVITARKĀ SAMĀPATTIH

"[As long as there is] conceptual knowledge [based on] the intent of words in this [ecstatic state], [then this ecstasy is called] 'coincidence interspersed with cogitation'."

1.43: SMRITI-PARISHUDDHAU SVA-RŪPA-SHŪNYA-IVA-ARTHA-MĀTRA-NIRBHĀSĀ NIRVITARKĀ

"On the purification of the depth-memory (*smriti*), [which has become] as it were (*iva*) empty of its essence, [and when] the object alone is shining forth--[then this state is called] 'ultracogitative' [ecstatic coincidence]."

☐ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.42–1.43 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: The above rendering deviates somewhat from the one found in my book. Please note that the text has *jnāna-vikalpa* in the plural, that is, as literally "knowledge conceptualizations."

Once consciousness has settled and become relatively motionless, its inherent—but almost always hidden—property of reflectiveness becomes apparent, as in the case of water. Now all appearances are reflected equally, and the usual distinctions between the various components of consciousness, including observer, observed, and observing itself, disappear.

—Chip Hartranft, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali,* p. 16.

1.44: ETAYĀ EVA SAVICĀRĀ NIRVICĀRĀ CA SŪKSHMA-VISHAYĀ VYĀKHYĀTĀ

"Thus by this [above-mentioned form of cogitative ecstatic coincidence the other two types of ecstasy] [namely] the reflective and the ultrareflective are explained; [these have] subtle objects [as their meditative props]."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.44 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: My retranslation of this aphorism differs in a number of (insignificant) ways from the rendering in my book.

We know from aphorism 1.45, as discussed in Lesson 4, that the subtle objects that can be used as contemplative props (*ālambana*) in the *savicāra/nirvicāra* ecstasy cover a wide range, extending as they do from the ontic level of the subtle material elements (*tanmātra*) to the Undifferentiate (*alinga*).

FOUR OR EIGHT TYPES OF CONSCIOUS ECSTASY?

Aphorism 1.17, as we have seen, states that conscious ecstasy is associated with four forms (*rūpa*) of mental activity: cogitation (*vitarka*), reflection (*vicāra*), bliss (*ānanda*), and "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*). We further learned that *vitarka* and *vicāra* represent distinct levels of ecstatic experiencing each of which has a higher form (i.e., *nirvitarka* and *nirvicāra*) respectively.

What are we to make of *ānanda* and *asmitā* then? Do they represent distinct ecstatic states? In my commentary on aphorism 1.17, I answered this question in the negative. Some of the classical commentators, however, thought differently, as I will explain shortly. When we rely on the *Yoga-Sūtra* itself (especially aphorism 1.47), however, it would appear that Patanjali himself subscribed to a four-stage sequence of conscious ecstasy, as given on p. 308: *vitarka-, nirvitarka-*, *vicāra-,* and *nirvicāra-samādhi*.

This interpretation is not acknowledged by Vyāsa's *Yoga-Bhāshya,* the oldest extant Sanskrit commentary on Patanjali's work. According to Vyāsa, the proper sequence should be: *vitarka-, vicāra-, ānanda-*, and *asmitā-samādhi.* As he explains in his comments to aphorism 1.17, the four forms of higher mental activity are distributed over the various ecstatic states as follows:

asmitā-samādhi	=	*asmitā*
ānanda-samādhi	=	*ānanda* + *asmitā*
vicāra-samādhi	=	*vicāra* + *ānanda* + *asmitā*
vitarka-samādhi	=	*vitarka* + *vicāra* + *ānanda* + *asmitā*

This model leaves the place of *nirvitarka-* and *nirvicāra-samādhi* unexplained. To resolve this problem, Vācaspati Mishra in his *Tattva-Vaishāradī* (1.17) intented the following eight-stage model:

The phrase "individuated ecstasy" for *asmitā-samādhi* is not altogether convincing, but I have not found a better way of rendering this Sanskrit compound into English. The problem is that the sense of "I" (*asmitā*) at the ecstatic level does not involve the usual identification with a body-mind. It is, rather, a sense of disembodied preindividuality, since the psychocosmic *asmitā-mātra* (existing at the unparticularized level, or *avishesha-parvan*) is in fact the principle giving rise to individuality at lower (particularized or *vishesha*) levels of existence. Furthermore, if this additional four types of ecstasy were possible, would Patanjali not have referred to them?

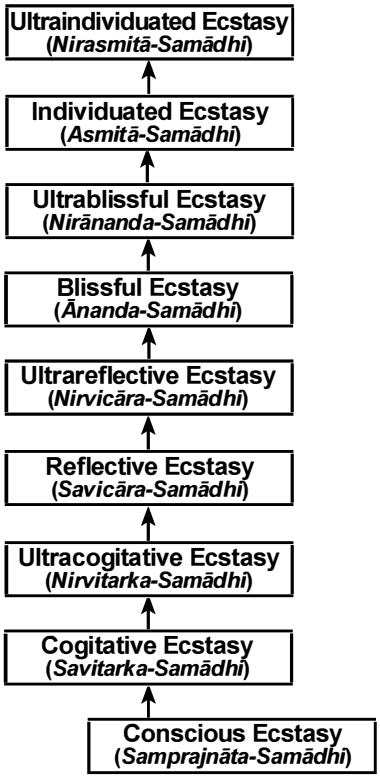
That Vācaspati Mishra's model is highly questionable is apparent from the fact that Vijnāna Bhikshu in his monumental *Yoga-Vārttika* (1.46) explicitly rejected it. Instead, he saw bliss (*ānanda*) as a phenomenon occurring at the extreme of reflective ecstasy, which then becomes the contemplative prop at the level of blisfful ecstasy.

As for *asmitā-samādhi,* Vyāsa states in his *Yoga-Bhāshya* (1.36) that "the mind that "coincides" (*samāpannam*) in [the state of] *asmitā* [-*samādhi*] becomes tranquil and infinite like a waveless ocean." In his comments on *sūtra* 1.17, he uses the phrase *eka-ātmikā samvid,* which means something like "single-self consciousness," which Vijnāna Bhikshu paraphrased as "consciousness conforming with the transcendental Self" (*kevala-purusha-ākāra-samvid*). His interpretation of Vyāsa's phrase, however, bears the stamp of his, Vijnāna Bhikshu's, Vedāntic orientation. Since, according to Patanjali, all types of conscious ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) have either a coarse (*sthūla*) or subtle (*sūkshma*) object, the unborn and deathless transcendental Self is by definition excluded. Traditionally, though not in the *Yoga-Sūtra,* its is characterized as "subtler than the subtlest" (see, e.g., the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* 4.14).

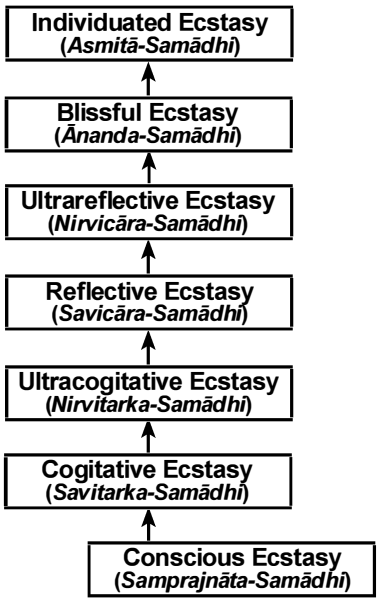
Be that as it may, Vijnāna Bhikshu definitely did not admit the existence of an ultrablissful and an ultraindividuated ecstasy. In other words, his model of ecstatic states comprises six types of *samāpatti.*

If my own interpretation of *samādhi* types, based on Patanjali's statements themselves, is correct, the higher mental activity of bliss and the sense of individuation are an integral aspect of all types of conscious ecstasy. It should be said, however, that it is in principle possible to make these "forms" of mental activity in *samprajnāta-samādhi,* the focus of contemplative attention. The fact is that anything whatsoever can be made a meditative object (*artha*).

Vācaspati Mishra's Model:



Vijnāna Bhikshu's Model:



BLISSFUL ECSTASY

It is important to understand that the bliss, or joy, of *ānanda-samādhi* is not equivalent to the bliss that, in the Vedānta tradition, is said to be an inherent quality of the transcendental Reality, alongside Awareness (*cit*) and pure Being (*sat*). Rather, *ānanda* stands here for a *sattvic* mental phenomenon of utmost joyousness. Patanjali does not associate either bliss or being with Spirit (*purusha*), but limits his characterization of the *purusha* to Awareness (*cit or citi*).

ULTRAREFLECTIVE ECSTASY

nirvicāra

Having gone over the above-mentioned readings, we can now examine some of the more recondite features of *samprajnata-samādhi.* Of particular interest is the condition called "ultrareflective ecstasy," or *nirvicāra-samādhi*. In this state, the *yogin* experiences himself as being one with a subtle object (*sūkshma-artha*) of his choice but without any intervening thought forms. The prefix *nis* (=*nir*) in *nirvicāra* suggests that the act of *vicāra* (ecstatic reflection) has come to a standstill, just as in *nirvitarka-samādhi* the various *vitarkas* (ecstatic insights relating to a coarse object) have ceased. What is left in the case of the *nirvicāra* state is a perfectly luminous state of consciousness *in relation* to a subtle object, a prop of attention, except that in the ecstatic state our attention is no longer separate from the attended object.

If attention can be compared to a searchlight, we could say that the object has become that searchlight and is now illuminating itself—a mind-boggling paradox. This situation is a little bit like having eaten a delicious meal. Instead of being on a plate in front of us, the meal is now in our stomach. It has, so to speak, become one with us, or we have become one with it, and through this process of eating, the food can reveal to us its unique flavor. Similarly, the object of attention is "eaten" and "relished" by the ecstatic mind. Thus, *samādhi* is necessarily the most intensely personal or direct experience (*ābhoga* = enjoyment, eating") by which we can taste the world, or an aspect of it. To continue my simile, just as after a good meal we lean back and enjoy a feeling of satisfaction, so in the state of ultrareflective ecstasy the *yogin* experiences an ecstatic fullness that, however, is more akin to a sense of delightful emptiness. Patanjali speaks of it as the "clarity of the inner being" (*adhyātma-prasāda*). As its name suggests, this ecstatic state is marked by a preponderance of *sattva.* Whenever lucidity or luminosity is present in the mind (or outside of it for that matter), we may safely assume the dominant agency of *sattva*. Thus the *nirvicāra* state is an advanced stage in the yogic process of *sattvification.* Here is Patanjali's explanation:

1.47: NIRVICĀRA-VAISHĀRADYE'DHYĀTMA-PRASĀDAH

"When there is lucidity in the ultrareflective [ecstasy], [then this is called] 'clarity of the inner being'."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.47 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Please delete the initial *a* from *'dhyātma* in the translation of aphorism 1.47 in my book. The preceding terminal *e* sound of *vaishāradye* grammatically demands that the *a* of *adhyātma* be elided (omitted and replaced by an *avagraha* represented by an apostrophe in transliteration.

YOGIC SAMĀDHI, TRANCE, AND MYSTICAL INTUITION

Patanjali's understanding of *samādhi* is that the state of ecstasy occurs in the wake of full sensory inhibition (*pratyāhāra*), that is, the *yogin* is unaware of the external environment. For this reason, some Western authorities have spoken of *samādhi* as a **trance state**. This characterization, however, is misleading, because the typical (hypnotic) trance is not accompanied by the high level of lucidity that we find in *samādhi.* However, conventional yogic *samādhi* and trance have at least the following three criteria in common: (1) focused attention, (2) withdrawal of attention from the external world, and (3) absorption in the inner world.

There also are types of *samādhi* that occur in the waking state and involve what might be called "cosmic consciousness"—a vivid awareness of the interrelatedness of all things, or of their underlying matrix, which is embedded in a high degree of bliss, or joy. Patanjali does not mention this kind of ecstasy, nor does he refer to the spontaneous ecstasy (*sahaja-samādhi*) that is the culmination of some Tantric approaches.

Just as yogic *samādhi* must not be equated with trance, it also ought to be carefully distinguished from **mystical intuition**. The latter can be defined as a state of consciousness that happens in the waking state and does not involve full sensory inhibition. It is primarily a feeling state, though naturally having some cognitive components, in which the individual experiences himself or herself in touch with a higher reality. Most of the realizations described by Franklin Merrell-Wolff in his autobiographical book *Pathways Through to Space* would seem to fall into the category of mystical intuition, though apparently some of his students experienced what he typified as "trance" states. In his own words, "There have been some instances bordering on ecstatic trance, though the rule has been the experiencing of ecstatic or noetic values without any trance effect" (p. 286). Merrell-Wolff's mind, highly trained in mathematics and philosophy, was given to observation and conceptualization, and this seems to have determined the nature of his mystical inquiries and experimentations. Though inspired by the nondualist metaphysics and method of Shankara, the great teacher of Advaita Vedānta, Merrell-Wolff was eager to tread his own path. I am mentioning him and his work here only because he illustrates well the approach of mystical intuition rather than yogic realization.

1.48: RITAM-BHARĀ TATRA PRAJNĀ

"In this [ecstatic state of utmost lucity] insight is truth-bearing."

1.49: SHRUTA-ANUMĀNA-PRAJNĀBHYĀM ANYA-VISHAYĀ VISHESHA-ARTHATVĀT

"The scope [of the truth-bearing insight] is distinct from the insight [gained from] tradition and inference [owing to its] particular purposiveness."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.48–1.49 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

All forms of *samādhi,* because they yield unmediated knowledge of the object of meditation, can be said to be truthful revelations of the object's inner nature. The *nirvicāra* state, however, is special insofar as reveals the object at its deepest (most subtle) level, "in truth." The German philosopher Immanuel Kant believed that the *Ding an sich,* the Thing Itself, or Reality as it is apart from a perceiving subject, can never be known. This makes logical sense as long as we believe that sensory knowledge or logical deduction are the only way of attaining knowledge. The *yogins* beg to differ, and their entire spiritual technology is designed to give us access to Reality in its raw state. To accomplish this, both the senses and the mind must be transcended. In *nirvicāra-samādhi,* the adept comes to know the Cosmos (*prakriti*) as it really is. Most importantly, as I will explain in the concluding Lesson, this extraordinary state affords the adept an opportunity to step up the spiritual process by allowing him or her to develop the vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*) between Cosmos and Spirit, which alone leads toward liberation.

Significantly, according to Patanjali, the ultrareflective ecstasy itself still does not reveal Spirit (*purusha*) in its true nature. For this, another crucial step must be taken: When the mind has ecstatically penetrated the object of meditation to the point where the latter is present as pure light, the decisive switch from an object-dependent ecstatic state (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) to the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) takes place. The latter state, as I will explain in Lesson 15, removes the karmic holding patterns of the mind and enables the adept to fully *realize* the utterly transcendental Spirit.

THE THREE OBJECTS OF SAMĀPATTI

As we have seen from aphorism 1.41, *samāpatti* involves the coalescence of experiencer, experience, and experienced. From aphorism 1.39, we know that meditation (and therefore) *samāpatti* can have any object whatsoever, and, according to Vijnāna Bhikshu, this includes the perceiving subject and the process of perception itself. In other words, the sense of "I" and cognition can be made a meditative prop. This does not violate Patanjali's definition of *samāpatti* as furnished in *sūtra* 1.41; every *samāpatti* state involves the coalescence of subject (*grahītri*), object (*grāhya*), and the cognitive process (*grahana*).

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Akhilananda, Swami. *Hindu Psychology: Its Meaning for the West.* London: Routledge, 1947.

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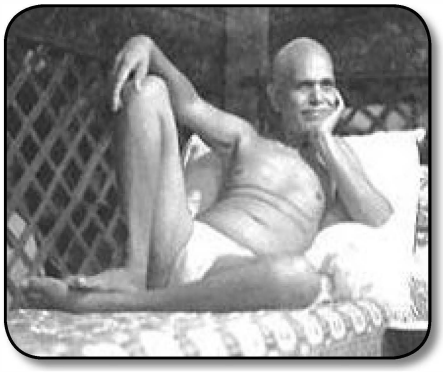
Suggested Yoga Practice

WHO AM I?



Our normal state of consciousness is based on our identifying with a particular body-mind. The ecstatic state, on the other hand, is based on identifying with an intentional (meditational) object of our choice. It makes sense, therefore, to inquire into the mechanism by which we make all such identifications. In other words, who or what is the identifying subject? This consideration takes us straight to the method discovered spontaneously by the great twentieth-century South-Indian master Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879—1950). At the age of seventeen and in perfect health, he was inexplicably gripped by the fear of death. He realized in a flash, "Now, death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies." He laid down as though he were a corpse, held his breath, and continued to have the culminating insight (*prajnā*) that when the body dies, the immortal Spirit remains. Simultaneously, his sense of I (the ego) became dissolved in an infinite ocean of unchanging Awareness (*cit*). He was magnetically drawn to Mount Arunachala, where he would spent the remainder of his earthly life.

Based on his own experience in his youth, Ramana formulated a novel method by which a spiritual seeker could transcend the mind's conceptual categories and realize his or her true identity (i.e., the transcendental Spirit-Self. His simple method of Self-inquiry (*ātma-vicāra*) consists in repeatedly and earnestly asking onself: "Who am I?" and listening inward for the answer. This thought, Ramana felt, would obliterate all other thoughts and in the end even eliminate itself, just like "the stick used for stirring a burning pyre is in the end destroyed by the fire." Whenever other thoughts intrude into this practice of Self-inquiry, the seeker should simply ask himself or herself: "To whom does this thought arise?" The natural answer would be: "To me." This again allows one to continue with the inquiry "Who am I?"

AaTmivcar

ātma-vicāra

With this question, one seeks to penetrate to the source of consciousness, which is none other than the transcendental Awareness. As Ramana assured us:

> With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense-organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear.

> Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called "inwardness" (antar-mukha). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as "externalisation" (bahir-mukha). Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine.*

When asked about the nature of the mind, Sage Ramana replied:

> What is called 'mind' is a wondrous power residing in the Self. It causes all thoughts to arise. Apart from thoughts, there is no such thing as mind. Therefore, thought is the nature of mind. Apart from thoughts, there is no independent entity called the world. In deep sleep there are no thoughts, and there is no world. In the states of waking and dream, there are thoughts, and there is a world also.*

For the next two weeks, at least four times a week, spend a minimum of 15 minutes practicing Self-inquiry à la Ramana Maharshi. Practice as follows:

1. Sit quietly in your favorite *āsana* or in any other fashion as long as you do not slouch or recline, both of which are conducive to drowsiness rather than relaxed alertness.
2. Mentally form a resolution (*samkalpa*) to sincerely engage this practice for a specific period of time or longer if it feels right to do so.
3. Calm your emotions and listen inward.
4. Ask yourself: "Who am I?"
5. Wait for an answer from within yourself.
6. If extraneous thoughts pop into your mind, ask yourself "To whom does this thought (or these thoughts) arise. Then repeat "Who am I?" in a relaxed manner and again wait for an answer. Remember that you are inquiring into the transcendental source of consciousness.
7. If you feel frustrated with this exercise, ask yourself "To whom is this frustration arising?" If your mind answers "Well, of course to *me*!," then ask yourself "Who am I?"
8. Practice Self-inquiry also during the day whenever you recall to do so.

*Quoted from *Who Am I?,* edited by and compiled from Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's recorded dialogues with visitors to Ramanashram at Tiruvannamalai, South India. The full text of this and several other compilations can be found online at *www.ramana-maharshi.org/books.htm*

For Reflection

1. Do you think of ecstasy as a natural and desirable aspect of the spiritual path or as an aberrant condition that ought to be avoided? Does the idea of entering such a state of consciousness scare you? Is your fear perhaps based on a bad experience with psychedelic drugs? Or is your fear due to a less specific cause? If you were told that the ecstatic state is a necessary feature of Yoga, would you seek to cultivate it more directly and energetically or would you still seek to avoid it out of fear?

2. Would your family or friends describe you as exuberant or as buttoned down? In other words, do you tend to express your emotions freely, or do you generally seek to control your emotional self-expression? How does this play into your attitude about ecstatic experiences?

3. Are you concerned that ecstasy involves losing control of yourself or being controlled by someone or something outside you? How important is being in control to you in everyday life? Or do you perhaps feel that life is always somehow out of your control and that therefore the urge to be in control is based on an illusion?

4. In meditation, have you ever felt that you were holding back, that you were reticent to allow the meditative process to proceed beyond a certain point? If so, what was or is your fear? How does this relate to your attitude about ecstasy?

5. Do you think that psychedelic drugs can be useful on the spiritual path or that they merely lead to delusional states? Do you feel that the numerous so-called holy men (*sādhu*) of India who smoke *ganja* (cannabis) or *charas* (hashish) are deceiving themselves? Or do you think that someone could have genuine spiritual experiences and still enjoy smoking dope?

6. Do you think that it is possible for a person to have all sorts of *samādhi* experiences and yet show little growth on the spiritual path? Or are ecstatic experiences a sure sign of spiritual maturity?

7. In your opinion, do *samādhi* experiences necessarily make an individual passive and otherworldly? Or could they have a positive social value in addition to any spiritual value they might have?

8. Would you seek out ecstatic experiences if you knew they would trigger in you a profound disinterest in worldly life? How would you react if you were told that genuine Yoga practice would have the same effect?

QUESTIONNAIRE 14

(Please **submit** this particular questionnaire to tyslearning@sasktel.net)

1. Which of the following options correctly parses the Sanskrit term *samādhi*? *(Check one)*

(a) *sa* + *mā* + *dhi*
(b) *sama* + *adhi*
(c) *samā* + *dhi*
(d) *sam* + *ā* + *dhi*
(e) *sa* + *mādhi*
(f) *sam* + *ād* + *hi*

2. Does *samyama* necessarily involve *samāpatti*? *(Check one)*

(a) yes
(b) no

3. In the context of *samādhi*, what is meant by *bhava? (Check one)*

(a) a profound state of ecstasy
(b) a state of heightened (religious) emotionality
(c) the condition of becoming on which all forms of conscious ecstasy is based
(d) ecstatic merging with Shiva (Bhāva)
(e) hypnotic state

4. Did Gautama Buddha know of *samādhi*? *(Check one)*

(a) yes
(b) no

5. Is it possible to experience *samādhi* without preparation? *(Check one)*

(a) yes
(b) no

6. What is meant by *savikalpa-samādhi*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) cognitive ecstasy
(b) ecstatic merging with an internalized object
(c) ecstasy with higher insights
(d) a form of *samāpatti*

7. What is meant by *kshana-samādhi*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) ecstatic merging with the smallest unit of time
(b) the ecstatic gap between thoughts
(c) becoming aware of a thought-free moment
(d) a momentary experience of ultrareflective ecstasy
(e) fleeting ecstasy
(f) a moment of unconscious thoughtlessness

8. Which of the following could constitute an intended object (*artha*) of *savitarka-samādhi*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) a bird
(b) an image of Shiva
(c) the *gunas*
(d) one's *guru*
(e) Spirit
(f) spirit entities (ghosts)
(g) the concept of liberation
(h) *prāna*
(i) the heart *cakra*

These questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

9. In what sense can the elevated insight(s) of *nirvicāra-vaishāradya* be called "truth-bearing"? *(Check one or more)*

(a) because the object is experienced without intervening concepts
(b) because the object belongs to the subtle (*sūkshma*) dimension
(c) because the object is experienced ecstatically from within itself
(d) because there is a prevalence of *sattva* in the *yogin's* mind
(e) because at this level the *yogin* is Self-realized
(f) because this is the testimony of Patanjali and numerous other adepts
(g) because this state is the terminal point of an entire series of ecstatic penetrations of the object
(h) because the *vrittis* have been completely subdued

10. If the five types of mental fluctuation (*vritti*) are brought under control in meditation, what mental activity is present in the state of *samādhi*? *(In two or more sentences)*

11. Do you believe the Vedāntic explanation that in deep sleep we enter a state of *samādhi* in which we are in touch with the transcendental Self? Justify your answer. *(In three or more sentences)*

12. Could *adhyātma-prasāda* be explained as a form of self-knowledge? *(In five or more sentences)*

Lesson 15
Moving Toward Liberation

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To gain an intuitive understanding of the higher ecstatic process that leads to liberation and to appreciate the enormous commitment requirement to gain mastery over one's own mind*

- From Ecstatic Insight to Freedom
- The Wisdom of the Sāmkhya-Sūtra
- Supraconscious Ecstasy
- Transparent Consciousness
- Supraconscious Ecstasy
- Seeded and Seedless Ectasy
- Levels of Mind Control
- Supraconscious Ecstasy and the Unconscious
- The Case of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda
- Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bibliography
- Supraconscious Ecstasy: Another Interpretation
- Dharma-Megha-Samādhi
- Further Reading
- Suggested Yoga Practice: Going on Retreat
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 15

FROM ECSTATIC INSIGHT TO FREEDOM

In Lesson 14, I explained the process of conscious ecstasy (*samprajnāta-samādhi*) up to the rarefied state of ultrareflective ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*). However, in order to avoid making that lesson even longer, I broke off the treatment at a certain point. I would now like to resume my discussion where I left it off and introduce some of the subtleties of that ecstatic modality before going on to the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) and beyond it to spiritual freedom (*kaivalya*).

In the ultrareflective ecstasy, the adept meets the object "face to face," that is, without the least cognitive distortion. That is to say, the insight (*prajnā*) is "truth bearing," as Patanjali puts it in *sūtra* 1.48. We must understand this process in light of the distinction between Seer (*drashtri*) and Seen (*drishya*), subject and object, Spirit and Cosmos, which is fundamental to Pātanjala-Yoga. I addressed this matter in Lesson 4. Please also refer back to the discussion of aphorisms 2.20 and 4.22 in Lesson 3, which are relevant to the present topic.

Throughout the yogic process, the *yogin* learns to uncouple the correlation (*samyoga*) between Spirit and Cosmos (i.e., Awareness and mind) by means of knowledge/wisdom and dispassion . In the ultrareflective ecstasy, the adept gets to encounter this existential problem most directly. In Patanjali's words:

2.23: SVA-SVĀMI-SHAKTYOH SVA-RŪPA-UPALABDHI-HETUH SAMYOGAH

"The correlation [between Seer and Seen] is the reason for the apprehension of the own-form (*sva-rūpa*) of the power of the Owner [i.e., Spirit] and that of the Owned [i.e., the Cosmos]."

2.24: TASYA HETUR AVIDYĀ

"The cause of this [correlation] is ignorance."

2.25: TAD-ABHĀVĀT SAMYOGA-ABHĀVO HĀNAM TAD-DRISHEH KAIVALYAM

"With the disappearance of this [ignorance], the correlation [between Spirit and Cosmos also] disappears; this is [total] cessation, the aloneness of the [sheer power of] seeing."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms *2*.23–2.25 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have slightly rephrased the above aphorisms to make them more readable. In particular, I have rendered *avidyā* as "ignorance" rather than the more obscure synonym "nescience." Grammatically, in 2.25, *abhāvah* becomes *abhāvo* because of the following *h* sound.

2.26: VIVEKA-KHYĀTIR AVIPLAVĀ HĀNA-UPĀYAH

"The means of [attaining] the cessation [of this correlation] is the unceasing vision of discernment."

2.27: TASYA SAPTADHĀ PRĀNTA-BHŪMIH PRAJNĀ

"For him [who possesses this unceasing vision of discernment] there arises, in the last stage, a sevenfold insight."

■ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 2.26–2.27 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In 2.26, *kyhātih* becomes *khyātir* because of the following *a* sound.

viveka-khyāti

The vision of discernment **(***viveka-khyāti***),** which occurs at the apex of the ultrareflective ecstasy is the fruition of conscious ecstasy. After spending an undetermined and perhaps undeterminable length of time in the thought-free condition of *nirvicāra-samādhi,* the adept crosses the threshold from conscious to supraconscious ecstasy. It is at this transitional moment that a flash of insight occurs in which the adept knows with utmost certainty that his yogic work is accomplished and that he is assured of liberation.

Sūtra 2.27 is possibly the most problematic aphorism in the *Yoga-Sūtra*, at least if we strictly follow Vyāsa's interpretation of it. For his explanation of what Patanjali means by "sevenfold insight" (*saptadhā prajnā*) suggests that *nirvicāra-samādhi,* rather than the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), functions as the direct means of liberation. This *seems* to be borne out by the following aphorism:

1.50: TAJ-JAH SAMSKĀRO'NYA-SAMSKĀRA-PRATIBANDHĪ

"The subliminal-activator born from that [truth-bearing insight] inhibits the other subliminal-activators."

■ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.50 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: In aphorism 1.50, I have replaced the word "obstructs" (*pratibandhin*) with "inhibits." Grammatically, *tat-jah* becomes *taj-jah* for euphonic reasons.

As long as we fail to see Reality as it truly is, that is, as long as we project our own confused ideas on it, we can be sure that we merely enrich our ignorance (*avidyā*) by contributing to the general stock of subliminal-activators of emergence (*vyutthāna-samskāra*) in the Unconscious. Conversely, when the adept has attained to the ultrareflective ecstasy in which Reality is directly known as it truly is (*yathā-bhuta*), then that truth-bearing knowledge runs counter to the dominant tendency of the Unconscious to replicate itself through the subliminal-activators of emergence.

To understand the afore-mentioned aphorism properly, we must first of all appreciate that the *Yoga-Sūtra* is not a systematic treatise but in some respects a compilation of almost stray *sūtras.* This is clear from the fact that aphorisms relating to the same topic do not necessarily occur in a straightforward sequence but are found scattered throughout Patanjali's text. In other words, the reader must use his or her own intelligence in grouping them together in the most meaningful way possible.

How, then, must we interpret aphorisms 2.26–2.27 and 1.50–1.51? *Nirvicāra-samādhi* is evidently a very special and most important ecstatic state. Not only does it disclose the true nature, or essence (*sva-rūpa*) of an object belonging to the subtle dimension of the Cosmos, but at its peak it also helps dissolve the correlation between Spirit and Cosmos. In this ecstatic state, the mind has become so refined (or *sattvic*) that it catches an unbiased glimpse of our true nature, which is transcendental Spirit (*purusha*). The seven-fold insight that manifests to the adept in a flash does not relate to, or depend on, any meditational object but is an integral recognition of the fact that the adept's mind is about to be completely transcended.

As Spirit reveals itself without distortion to the highly polished mirror of the adept's mind, the process of final transcendence of cosmic existence is initiated. A powerful mind-transcending subliminal-activator (*samskāra*) is created through the vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*), which then leads directly over into the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), where the elimination of all other subliminal-activators takes place. Thus, the supraconscious ecstasy completes the *nirodha* process so greatly intensified in the state of *nirvicāra* ecstasy.

THE WISDOM OF THE SĀMKHYA-SŪTRA

3.23: *jnānān muktih*
"Liberation [comes] from insight."

3.24: *bandho viparyayāt*
"Bondage [comes] from error."

3.37: *viparyaya-bhedāh panca*
"[There are] five kinds of error [viz. ignorance, I-am-ness or self-conceit (*abhimāna*), attachment, and aversion, and the will to live (*abhinivesha*)]."

3.71: *na ekāntato bandha-mokshau purushasya avivekād rite*
"Bondage and liberation are not really [qualities] of Spirit except through nondiscernment."

3.72: *prakriter ānjasyāt sa-sangatvāt pashuvat*
"[Bondage and liberation are] actually [qualities] of the Cosmos owing to the connection [with the *gunas*] just like a beast [is connected to a rope]."

As a byproduct of *nirvicāra-vaishāradya,* the *yogin* spontaneously obtains all the paranormal powers that previously he would have had to work hard to procure by means of lower states of ecstasy.

3.49: SATTVA-PURUSHA-ANYATĀ-KHYĀTI-MĀTRASYA SARVA-BHĀVA-ADHISHTHĀTRITVAM SARVA-JNĀTRITVAM

"[The *yogin* who has] only the vision of the distinction between the Self and the *sattva* [of the mind] [gains] supremacy over all states [of existence] as well as omniscience."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.49 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have slightly altered my rendering from that furnished in my book.

Aphorism 3.49 gives out Patanjali's true method for attaining liberation. As long as the *yogin* maintains the insight that even the highest aspect of the mind (namely *sattva* or *buddhi*) is not identical with Spirit, he will steer straight toward liberation, sooner or later. It is only when his mystical experiences, however elevated they may be, prop up the illusion that Cosmos (*prakriti*) and Spirit (*purusha*) are somehow conjoined (*samyoga*) that they will keep him entrapped in cyclic existence (*samsāra*). In other words, according to Patanjali, the yogic endeavor is liberating only so long as it is founded on the fundamental dualism between Cosmos and Spirit. Any maneuver within the vastness of the Cosmos that lacks the virtue of discernment (*viveka*) between Cosmos and Spirit is bound to lead to bondage (*bandha*), even at those levels of mystical attainment that leaves ordinary mortals speechless. Imagine having the power to create your own private universe, or even the power (like the creator deity Brahma) to manifest the multi-layered Cosmos itself, and yet not being liberated! *Anyatā-khyāti* is thus an all-important concept of Classical Yoga. It is equally relevant at the level of the *siddhas* and the level of our own modest spiritual development. Without cultivating discernment (*viveka*), we cannot grow on the spiritual path, for it alone makes for nonafflictive (*aklishta*) mental states that lead beyond the experience of suffering.

purusha-jnāna

The use of the term *purusha-jnāna* ("knowledge of Spirit") in aphorism 3.35 (see Lesson 13), in my opinion, refers to the ecstatic vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*) in which the adept becomes fully aware of the radical distinction between Spirit and the rarefied (*sāttvika*) mind. Because in the ultrareflective ecstasy all ideation has ceased, *purusha-jnāna* is strictly speaking also not possible. The mind has become like completely transparent glass in which the "light" of Spirit is faithfully reflected. "Knowledge of Spirit" is merely a convenient metaphor for this indefinable ecstatic state.

Sarva-bhāva-adhishthātritva could also be rendered as "omnipotence," while *sarva-jnātritva* stands for "omniscience." This supreme powers are not conventional paranormal abilities, which are gained by practicing ecstatic "constraint" (*samyama*) on specific meditational objects. Rather, they arise naturally at this high level of ecstasy as a result of the pure *sattva* of the adept's mind. To understand this elevated state

better, we must look at Patanjali's explanation of the concept of *parināma* or "transformation/transmutation" as it relates to *samādhi.*

3.9: VYUTTHĀNA-NIRODHA-SAMSKĀRAYOR ABHIBHAVA-PRĀDUR-BHĀVAU NIRODHA-KSHANA-CITTA-ANVAYO NIRODHA-PARINĀMAH

"[When there is] subjugation of the subliminal-activators of emergence and the manifestation of the subliminal-activators of control, [this is known as] the 'control transformation,' which is connected with the mind [in its] moment of control."

3.10: TASYA PRASHĀNTA-VĀHITĀ SAMSKĀRĀT

"The calm flow of this [mind] [is effected] through subliminal-activators."

3.11: SARVA-ARTHATĀ-EKĀGRATAYOH KSHAYA-UDAYAU CITTASYA SAMĀDHI-PARINĀMAH

"The dwindling of 'all-objectness' and the uprising of one-pointedness is [known as] the 'ecstasy transformation' of the mind."

3.12: TATAH PUNAH SHĀNTA-UDITAU TULYA-PRATYAYAU CITTASYA EKĀGRATĀ-PARINĀMAH

"Then again, when the quiescent and the uprisen ideas are similar, [this is known as] the 'one-pointedness transformation' of the mind."

3.13: ETENA BHŪTA-INDRIYESHU DHARMA-LAKSHANA-AVASTHĀ-PARINĀMĀ VYĀKHYĀTĀH

"By this are [also] explained the transformations of form, variation, and condition [with regard to] the elements [and] senses."

3.14: SHĀNTA-UDITA-AVYAPADESHYA-DHARMA-ANUPĀTĪ DHARMĪ

"The form-bearer (*dharmin*) [i.e., the substance] is [that which] conforms to the quiescent, uprisen, or indeterminable form (*dharma*)."

3.15: KRAMA-ANYATVAM PARINĀMA-ANYATVE HETUH

"The differentiation in the sequence is the reason for the differentiation in the transformations."

■ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.9–3.15 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have slightly altered the renderings of some aphorisms from those furnished in my book. In 3.9, *samskārayoh* becomes *samskārayor* because of the following *a* sound, while in 3.13, the plural *parināmāh* loses its *visarga* (*h*) because of the following *v* sound.

This group of aphorisms deal with a rather recondite philosophical theme, which nevertheless is of practical import for the *yogin.* Notably, from a psychospiritual perspective, the discussion revolves around the mind's polar tendencies of what could be called "introversion" and "extraversion." Patanjali uses the terms *nirodha* ("control") and *vyutthāna* ("emergence") respectively. The mind, in other words, can be programmed either to lose itself in the objects of attention or to dissolve (i.e., transcend) itself through a course of discipline like Yoga. The former tendency is referred to in aphorism as "all-objectness" (*sarva-arthatā*), while the latter is marked by "one-pointedness" (*eka-agratā*). Either tendency is based on powerful unconscious impulses (*samskāra*).

In the case of the subliminal-activators of control (*nirodha-samskāra*), however, a strong conscious intention is involved, while, as we all know from first-hand experience, the unconscious habit of mental scatteredness are acquired and sustained automatically. The body-mind is designed to function in the external world via the ten senses plus the lower mind (*manas*), as the eleventh sense. It takes very little, if any effort, to become addicted to a bad habit, but good habits are difficult to cultivate. From the viewpoint of Yoga, the worldling's intense preoccupation with worldly matters and the "outside" world are a form of addiction. The *yogin* strives vigorously to overcome this addiction and to nurture instead the spiritual impulse toward self-transcendence and ultimate liberation.

At the empirical level of existence, the continually changing conditions, as Gautama Buddha recognized, make for a great deal of suffering: Nothing is stable and reliable. At the same time, however, the very mutability of the Cosmos also guarantees that we have not only unpleasant and painful experiences but also those that bring us (at least temporary) relief, pleasure, and joy. Above all, the fact that *prakriti* is in constant flux makes it possible for us to disentangle ourselves from *prakriti's* snares altogether and to realise our intrinsic freedom as Spirit (*purusha*) beyond the orbit of the Cosmos. Thus, on the one hand, the mind's changeability is a burden to us, but on the other hand, we can use this fact to our spiritual advantage. Instead of allowing the mind to deploy its energies "horizontally" in ever-new karmic involvements, we can harness its power and develop the "vertical axis" of more and more refined states of consciousness in meditation and *samādhi* until we become utterly transparent to ourselves and "re-cognize" our true identity as Spirit.

In case there was any doubt, aphorisms 3.9–3.15 evince Patanjali's philosophical bent of mind and the highly technical nature of his text.

3.35: SATTVA-PURUSHAYOR ATYANTA-ASAMKĪRNAYOH PRATYAYA-AVISHESHO BHOGAH PARA-ARTHATVĀT SVA-ARTHA-SAMYAMĀT PURUSHA-JNĀNAM

"Experience is an idea [based on] the nondistinction between the absolutely unblended Spirit and *sattva.* Through constraint on [the *purusha's*] 'own-purpose,' [which is distinct from] the 'other-purposiveness' [of the Cosmos], knowledge of Spirit [is obtained]."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.35 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: This *sūtra* covers the same phenomenon as mentioned in aphorisms 3.49 and 4.25 and may in fact have been mistakenly moved from Chapter 4 to Chapter 3. This kind of transposition is not unheard of in the Sanskrit literature. Remember that *Sūtras* were originally memorized! For grammatical (euphonic) reasons, the dual genitive *sattva-purushayoh* must be changed to *sattva-purushayor* when preceding an initial *a* sound (in *atyanta*). Similarly, the terms *sva-artha* and *para-arthatva* are written in Sanskrit as follows: *svārtha* and *parārthatva,* but I have separated the components for easier comprehension.

I appreciate that the explanation furnished in my book may not be clear enough. The *purusha's* "own purpose" (*sva-artha*) refers to the fact that, according to Patanjali, Spirit has no purpose beyond itself. Or, to put it differently, Spirit has the single and simple purpose of being eternally free, pure, and unchanging. The cosmos, by contrast, has the twofold purpose of either trapping or liberating the mind, that is, of either revealing or concealing Spirit to the mind. Thus, the Cosmos (and the mind as part of cosmic existence) can be said to be entirely "other-purposed" or to exist for the sake of another (i.e., Spirit).

Spirit is self-sufficient and the transcendental Witness of the processes within the Cosmos. Ordinarily, we are quite unaware of this fact, and our experience of the world depends on this ignorance. As we climb the ladder of ecstatic states, however, we become increasingly aware of the distinction between Spirit and mind or, as Patanjali puts it, between *purusha* and *sattva.* In the condition of *nirvicāra-samādhi,* this fundamental difference becomes the central feature of ecstatic realization. At a high level of *savicāra-samādhi* preceding the ultrareflective state, it is possible to boost the process by practicing *samyama* on the critical distinction between Spirit and mind in terms of their relative purpose. I chose to discuss this aphorism here rather than in Lesson 14, because it refers to "knowledge of Spirit" (*purusha-jnāna*) and seems quite out of place in its current location in the third *pāda* of the *Yoga-Sūtra*.

The concept of *purusha-jnāna* is a tricky one, for the mind can never really know the transcendental Self, or Spirit. Therefore, strictly speaking, what this particular exercise in ecstatic constraint reveals is not Spirit itself but the certainty of the existence of the *purusha* apart from the mind and the Cosmos at large.

By what could one know That by which all is known?

***—Brihad-Āranyaka-Upanishad* 4.5.15**

3.52: KSHANA-TAT-KRAMAYOH SAMYAMĀD VIVEKA-JAM JNĀNAM

"Through constraint on the moment [of time] and its sequence, [the *yogin* obtains] knowledge born of discernment."

3.53: JĀTI-LAKSHANA-DESHAIR ANYATĀ-ANAVACCHEDĀT TULYAYOS TATAH PRATIPATTIH

"Thence [arises] the awareness (*pratipatti*) of [the difference between] similars that cannot normally be distinguished due to an indeterminateness of the distinctions of categroy, appearance, and position."

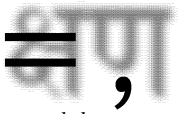
3.54: TĀRAKAM SARVA-VISHAYAM SARVATHĀ-VISHAYAM AKRAMAM CA ITI VIVEKA-JAM JNĀNAM

"The knowledge born of discernment is the 'deliverer' and is omni-objective, omni-temporal, and nonsequential."

■ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 3.52–3.54 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have made only slight and inconsequential changes in my renderings of these aphorisms compared to those provided in my book. In aphorism 3.53, *tulyayoh* must be changed to *tulyayos* because of the following initial *t* sound of *tatah.*

The entire yogic path is marked by the practice of discernment (*viveka*) between Spirit (Awareness) and Cosmos (mind, consciousness). With growing mental purity (*sattvification*), this exercise becomes increasingly refined. Gradually, we learn to distinguish between our own mental events (thoughts, emotions, etc.) and the outside world. For instance, we cease to blame others for our own mistakes and instead take responsibility for our actions. We also learn to distinguish the sense of I (*asmitā*) from other activities in our own mind. Thus, we cease to identify with the coming and going of thoughts and emotions but grasp that all this activity is due to the incessant transmutation of the Cosmos itself, via the *gunas.* At the level of ecstasy, we learn that even the sense of I is an artefact of the mind and that our true identity is the transcendental Spirit. This recognition occurs most overwhelmingly in *nirvicāra-samādhi.* It is here that *viveka* blossoms into *viveka-khyāti* or what is also called *viveka-ja-jnāna,* that is "knowlege born of discernment."


kshana

At the level of *savicāra-samādhi,* we can, as explained in aphorism 3.52, promote this vision by practicing ecstatic constraint on the concept of *kshana*, or "moment," which is the smallest temporal unit. As aphorism 3.54 informs us, the resultant knowledge is instantaneous, extends over all things and over all time, and, most importantly, is *liberating*. That is to say, the discernment-born knowledge manifesting in and through *nirvicāra-samādhi* gives the mind the necessary momentum to transcend itself and the Cosmos as a whole. It has the power to "deliver" the *yogin* from the apparent connection (or "correlation," *samyoga*) between Spirit and Cosmos, or Awareness and consciousness by catapulting him into the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) in which the mind is left to consume

itself and in which the adept is at least temporarily present as Spirit.

The relative disorganization of the materials in the extant versions of the *Yoga-Sūtra,* which I have referred in earlier Lessons, is further demonstrated with the arrangement of the *sūtras* in the fourth *pāda* of Patanjali's work. Thus, aphorisms 4.25–4.33 are highly relevant to our consideration of the processes surrounding the vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*).

4.25: VISHESHA-DARSHINĀ ĀTMA-BHĀVA-BHĀVANĀ-VINIVRITTIH

"For him who sees the distinction [between *sattva* and Spirit] [there comes about] the discontinuation of the projection (*bhāvanā*) of the [false] self-sense."

4.26: TADĀ VIVEKA-NIMNAM KAIVALYA-PRĀG-BHĀRAM CITTAM

"The the mind [thus] inclined toward discernment is borne onward toward the 'aloneness' [of the power of seeing]."

4.27: TAC-CHIDRESHU PRATYAYA-ANTARĀNI SAMSKĀREBHYAH

"In the intervals of that [vision of discernment], other [new] ideas [may arise] from the [pool of] subliminal-activators."

4.28: HĀNAM ESHĀM KLESHAVAD UKTAM

"Their cessation [is achieved by the same means] as described for the causes-of-affliction."

4.29: PRASAMKHYĀNE'PY AKUSĪDASYA SARVATHĀ VIVEKA-KHYĀTER DHARMA-MEGHAH SAMĀDHIH

"For [the *yogin* who is] always nonusurious even in [this state of] elevation, [there follows], through the vision of discernment, the ecstasy [known as] 'Cloud of Dharma' (*dharma-megha*)."

4.30: TATAH KLESHA-KARMA-NIVRITTIH

"Thence [follows] the discontinuation of the causes-of-affliction and of karma."

4.31: TADĀ SARVA-ĀVARANA-MALA-APETASYA JNĀNASYA ANANTYĀJ JNEYAM ALPAM

"Then [when] all coverings of imperfection are removed, little [remains] to be known because of the infinity of the [resulting] knowledge."

Continued

4.32: TATAH KRITA-ARTHĀNĀM PARINĀMA-KRAMA-SAMĀPTIR GUNĀNĀM

Thence [comes about] the termination of the sequences in the transformation of the *gunas* [whose] purpose is fulfilled."

4.33: KSHANA-PRATIYOGĪ PARINĀMA-APARA-ANTA-NIRGRĀHYAH KRAMAH

"Sequence [is that which is] correlative to a [temporal] moment apprehensible at the terminal-point of a [given] transformation."

◘ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 4.25–4.33 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: For easier comprehension, I have made a few minor changes in the above renderings. Grammatically, in aphorism 4.29, we encounter the by now familiar elision of the *a* sound in *api* following the term *prasāmkyane; api,* again, is changed for euphonic reasons to *apy* owing to the immediately following *a* sound of *akusīdasya.* In aphorism 4.30, please insert a square bracket after "[the state of" and remove the one after "elevation."In *sūtra* 4.31, the ablative *anantyāt* is changed to *anantyāj* because of the subsequent initial *j* sound of *jneyam.*

The above aphorisms, for the most part, are rather obscure. In addition to my commentary to the individual *sūtras,* I would like to offer the following clarifying observations. Manifestly, the vision of discernment is a crucial development in the *yogin's* journey toward liberation, and hence Patanjali dedicated a surprising number of aphorisms to it. This "vision," which is an ecstatic realization rather than anything resembling a visionary experience, yields truth-bearing knowledge that carries the mind inexorably toward liberation. It is like a signpost on a long journey that reads "You are almost at your destination." Because the Unconscious has not yet been emptied of subliminal-activators, which is the function of the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), it is possible that the tranquil flow of the adept's sattvic mind might be interrupted by renewed cognitive activity at the level of ecstatic insight (*prajnā*). That is to say, he or she may be thrown out of the *nirvicāra* state of consciousness back into *savicāra-samādhi.*

When this interference occurs, the adept must simply persist in emptying his or her mind so as to return to the ultrareflective state of ecstasy, which is also called "elevation" (*prasamkhyāna*). Now, the placement of aphorism 4.29 gives one the impression that the ecstatic condition called "Cloud of Dharma" ensues directly from the practice of the vision of discernment (*viveka-khyāti*), but this is not so because, according to 4.30, the Cloud of Dharma ecstasy removes the causes-of-affliction (*klesha*) and all karma. This, however, is possible only after the subliminal-activators (*samskāra*) have been eradicated in the supraconscious ecstasy. Thus, we must take *sūtra* 4.29 to mean that "in due course"—and only after the supraconsciousus ecstasy has fulfilled its task—the vision of discernment blossoms into the Cloud of Dharma ecstasy.

Aphorism 4.31 speaks of that sublime point in the evolution of the ecstatic process when there is

complete control (*sarva-nirodha*) of the mind. Then, "little" remains to be known; more precisely, nothing is left to be discovered, because the mind's game of identifying with everything but Spirit, has come to an end. Spirit is present in its pristine formlessness.

As an aside, Patanjali explains in aphorism 4.33 what he means by *kshana* ("moment"), which he talked about in aphorisms 3.9 and 3.52 in relation to the concept of ecstatic control (*nirodha*). It is only through ecstatic constraint (*samyama*) on the reality of a temporal moment that the adept escapes, as it were, the arrow of time and slips into the eternal Now. This is the gateway to what Patanjali calls "discernment-born wisdom" (3.52). This definition should clearly have come earlier in his text.

As we can glean from aphorism 4.34, with the attainment of the Cloud of Dharma ecstasy, the primary qualities (*guna*) of the Cosmos—though only relative to the adept's microcosm—have no further role to play and therefore become reabsorbed into the cosmic matrix (*prakriti-pradhāna* or *alinga*). With the return of the *gunas* to a state of sheer possibility, the microcosm (mind) of the adept is annihilated. The death of the physical body follows, and the adept has become pure Spirit. Patanjali's dualistic metaphysics allows for no other interpretation, as living liberation (*jīvan-mukti*) is possible only within a nondualistic framework. But I will discuss this in Lesson 16.

TRANSPARENT CONSCIOUSNESS

In order to allow direct seeing to take place, the mind, which by its very nature attempts to mediate between the object and the subject, has be quieted. When the mind is totally silent and totally alert [in *nirvicāra-samādhi*], both the real subject (*purusha*) and the real object (*prakriti*) are simultaenously present to it. When the seer is there and what is to be seen is there, seeing takes place without distortion . . . There is simply seeing in the present, the living moment in the eternal now.

—Ravi Ravindra, *Science and the Sacred,* p. 63

SUPRACONSCIOUS ECSTASY

Patanjali first hints at the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) in the first chapter of his text, as follows:

1.18: VIRĀMA-PRATYAYA-ABHYĀSA-PŪRVAH SAMSKĀRA-SHESHO'NYAH

"The other [type of ecstasy] has a residuum of subliminal-activators (*samskāra*); [it follows] the former [conscious ecstasy] upon the practice of the idea of cessation (*virāma*)."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.18 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: The initial *a* sound of the word *anya* must be elided (omitted) while the final *visarga* (h) of the preceding word *sheshah* must be converted to an *o* sound for euphonic reasons.

While in the supraconscious ecstasy the mind is empty of all intended objects (*artha*), that is, it lacks any meditative focus, it nonetheless feeds on the mental impulse (*pratyaya*), or disposition, for the mind to continue to void (transcend) itself. The task before the adept now is to tackle the Unconscious itself by deleting the karmic deposit (*āshaya*) altogether. This is a matter of obliterating the countless subliminal-activators (*samskāra*) that constitute the Unconscious and that, if unchecked, lead to renewed mental (and thus karmic) activity. We encountered the theory of subliminal activators in Lesson 5 where we examined Patanjali's ideas about the causes-of-suffering (*klesha*).

The least mental activity—be it at the level of the fluctuations (*vritti*) or the higher insights (*prajnā*) in the various ecstatic states—leaves a karmic trace in the Unconscious, that is, in the depth memory (*smriti*). Thus the Unconscious is composed not only of subliminal-activators produced in the present life but also those generated in all previous embodiments. Thus, the *samskāras* are deemed "beginningless" (*anādi*). They exist in the Unconscious as potentials that can become activated at any moment, depending on the "right" mental trigger. Another way of putting this is to say that we can never escape the consequences of our karmic activity. Sooner or later, those unconscious tendencies (*vāsanā*) will bear karmic fruit. All of the Cosmos (*prakriti*) can be seen as an immense field of karmic potentials and actualized karmic tendencies (which we call "structures,"

Samādhi is a key aspect of the yogic path, and it is important to understand its place and function within Yoga. You might want to pause here and ask yourself: Have I really grokked the discussion on samādhi thus far? Should I go more slowly, assume a more meditative mood, and review the materials?

"laws," and "regularities." Thus, galaxies, stars, planetary systems, and so forth are all karmic condensates, as are the beings inhabiting our world.

Patanjali's Yoga is not designed to nullify this vast karmic nexus as such. Rather, its traditonal purpose is a more modest but still astounding task: namely to neutralize the karmic potential of our own miniature universe (microcosm), as it presents itself in the form of our own mind. By cleaning up our own karmic mess, we indirectly (and to a modest degree) also contribute to the general transformation of the collective karma of the Cosmos. Only such advanced spiritual traditions as Vajrayāna (or Tantric) Buddhism advocate the ideal of generic karmic cleansing in the shape of the *bodhisattva* ideal: The *bodhisattva* is dedicated to the spiritual upliftment of all beings, wherever and at whatever existential level they might be in the Cosmos. The more limited ideal of Pātanjala-Yoga is to liberate oneself by disabling the Unconscious insofar as it relates to one's own mental continuum.

SEEDED AND SEEDLESS ECSTASY

sabīja

nirbīja

Bīja ("seed") has been taken to refer to the meditative object, otherwise known as the "prop" (*ālambana*). *Sabīja* ("with seed" or "seeded") ecstasy is accordingly the type of ecstatic state in which the adept focuses on an internalized object (*artha*).

Nirbīja ("without seed" or "seedless") ecstasy, by contrast, has no such prop on which attention could be fixed. This elevated ecstatic condition is also known as *asamprajnāta-samādhi.* This state can no longer be designated as *samāpatti,* because subject, object, and the cognitive process are all transcended.

The following aphorism, taken from the first *pada* of Patanjali's work, refers to the former type of ecstasy:

1.46: TĀ EVA SABĪJAH SAMĀDHIH

"These [types of conscious ecstasy] verily [belong to the class of] seeded ecstasy."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.18 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have made some slight changes in my rendering for easier comprehension.

Some later commentators, notably Rāmānanda Yatī (author of the *Mani-Prabhā*) interpret *bīja* in the sense of "subliminal-activator."

1.51: TASYA API NIRODHE SARVA-NIRODHĀN NIRBĪJA-SAMĀDHI

"Upon the control also of this [final] subliminal-activator (*samskāra*)], [there ensues], owing to the control of all [contents of consciousness,] the seedless ecstasy."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 1.51 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: The apostrophe in this aphorism indicates the elision (omission) of the initial *a* sound of *anya* ("other"). In keeping with my earlier comments about *nirodha*, I have changed the rendering of *sūtra* 1.51 to read "control" rather than "restriction." As for grammatical rules, the initial *n* sound of *nirbīja* requires that the preceding word *nirodhāt* ("owing to control") is changed to *nirodhān*.

LEVELS OF MIND CONTROL

Based on the *Yoga-Sūtra* itself, we can map out the following progression of internal control:

1. ***vritti-nirodha* — control of the five types of mental fluctuation by means of meditation (*dhyāna*) leading to the state of ecstasy (*samādhi*)**
2. ***prajnā-nirodha* — by means of ultrareflective ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*) leading to supraconscious ecstasy**
3. ***bīja-nirodha* — control of the meditative prop by means of supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*)**
4. ***samskāra-nirodha* — control of the subliminal-activators by means of sustained supraconscious ecstasy**
5. ***sarva-nirodha* — control of all contents of consciousness leading to the Cloud of Dharma ecstasy (*dharma-megha-samādhi*).**

But though the word trance is used generally for *Samādhi* and many people whose knowledge of these things is very superficial take mere trance to be a state of *Samādhi*, there is nothing in common between them except the insensibility of the physical body and the suspension of the sensory functions. This condition can also be produced very easily by many other agencies, by hypnosis, by anaesthesia, by disease, by drugs, by emotional ecstasy and by a mediumistic constitution, in which case the indwelling entity can easily and naturally step out of the physical body into the next subtler vehicle of consciousness . . . When a person comes out of *Samādhi* he is wiser . . . while a man who comes out of ordinary trance induced by any other method is just what he was before.

—I. K. Taimni, *Glimpses Into the Psychology of Yoga,* p. 325

1.19: BHAVA-PRATYAYO VIDEHA-PRAKRITI-LAYĀNĀM

"[The ecstasy of those who have] merged with the Cosmos [i.e., the cosmic matrix] [and those who are] bodiless [is due to the persistence of] the idea of becoming."

1.20: SHRADDHĀ-VĪRYA-SMRITI-SAMĀDHI-PRAJNĀ-PŪRVAKA ITARESHĀM

"[The supraconscious ecstasy] of the others [i.e., those *yogins* whose path is described in aphorism 1.18] is preceded by faith, energy, mindfulness, ectasy, and insight (*prajnā*)."

1.21: TĪVRA-SAMVEGĀNĀM ĀSANNAH

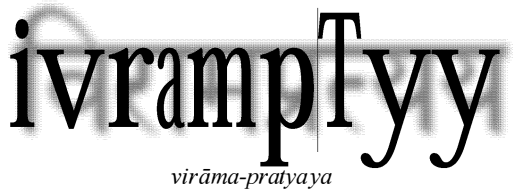
"[This supreme ecstasy] is near to [him who is] very intense [in his practice of Yoga."

1.22: MRIDU-MADHYA-ADHIMĀTRATVĀT TATO'PI VISHESHAH

"Because [this intensity can be] modest, medium, or extraordinary, [there is] hence also a difference [in the proximity of the *yogin* to liberation]."

■ Now read my commentaries on aphorisms 1.19–1.22 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: Please note the altered wording in the above aphorisms. In aphorism 1.19, the term *prakriti* refers to *prakriti-pradhāna,* that is, the transcendental matrix of the Cosmos. Grammatically, *pratyayah* becomes *pratyayo* because of the following *v* sound. In 1.20, *purvakah* is changed to *purvaka* on account of the following *i* sound. In *sūtra* 1.22, *tatah api* becomes *tato 'pi* to conform to the euphonic rules of Sanskrit.



From a yogic point of view, the *prakriti-layas* and *videhas* are failures on the path, for their state of being—although extraordinary by conventional standards—does not amount to true liberation. They are still caught in *samsāra.* Their error is an extremely subtle one: In their lofty spiritual realization, they still somehow cling to the notion of becoming (*bhava-pratyaya*). By implication, then, the *yogin* heading toward unconditional freedom must jettison this notion and enter into full-fledged supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*). This is captured in aphorism 1.18 in the concept of *virāma-pratyaya* or the notion of cessation: Everything that belongs to the Cosmos, including and especially the mind (*citta*) must stop whirling about. That this is possible must become a deep-seated conviction for the *yogin.* Thus *bhava-pratyaya* and *virāma-pratyaya* spell out antithetical attitudes. While the former at best leads to a merger with the cosmic matrix, only the latter can guide the *yogin* to true liberation.

Aphorism 1.20 suggests that the right orientation to the yogic process depends on the preconditions

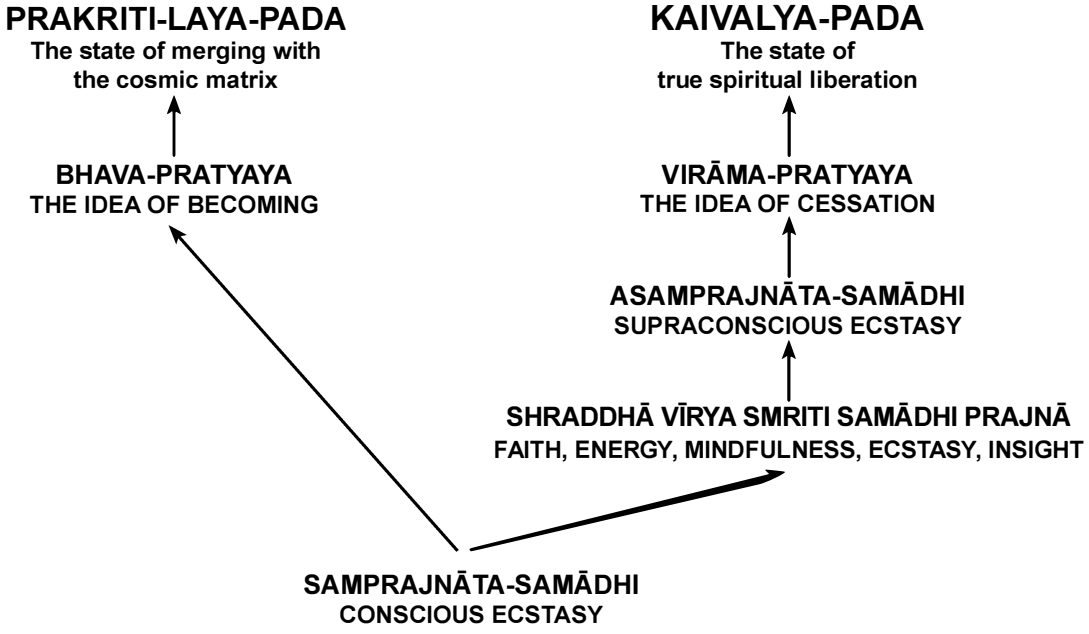
of faith, energy (vigor), mindfulness, conscious ecstasy, and insight.

From the *Yoga-Bhāshya* (3.51), we know that the Classical Yoga tradition acknowledges four classes of *yogins,* corresponding to specific levels of spiritual attainment:

1. *prathama-kalpika,* the neophyte, who may or may not have experienced lower forms of ecstasy
2. *mādhu-bhūmika*, the adept who has attained the "honeyed" or delightful stage coinciding with the "truth-bearing" insight at the peak of supra ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*); it is at this level of accomplishment that the *yogin* may encounter higher beings, as spoken of in aphorism 3.51
3. *prajnā-jyotis,* the master who has reached the light of wisdom and has attained complete mastery of the elements and senses
4. *atikrānta-bhāvanīya,* the supreme adept who is about to transcend all conditioned existence through the process of the resolution (*pratiprasava*) of the *gunas* back into the transcendental matrix of the Cosmos

While the *prakriti-layas* undoubtedly enjoy an elevated all-powerful state, they continue to fatally identify with the Cosmos at its transcendental source (*pradhāna*). The *videhas* succumb to a false sense of identity at even earlier stages of this process. In both cases, only a state of pseudo-liberation is reached.

It is clear from *sūtra* 1.20 that success on the spiritual path depends greatly on gaining and maintaining the right orientation (which is based on sharp discernment or *viveka*) and that without it, it is easy to go astray at any point in one's inner development.



SUPRACONSCIOUS ECSTASY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

The paradoxical state of supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*) belies all psychoanalytical theories that insist on the necessary existence of the Unconscious. The great adepts of Yoga unanimously affirm that the Unconscious not only can be entirely eliminated but must be so eliminated in order to realize inner freedom. Needless to say, mainstream psychoanalysts do not take this claim seriously but rather see it as yet another instance of the Unconscious playing tricks on the human mind.

As Sigmund Freud showed at the beginning of the twentieth century, (a) there is such a thing as the Unconscious, (b) it influences human behavior, and (c) it can be accessed to a limited degree through psychoanalytical techniques and other similar means in the interest of psychological wholeness. His student Carl Gustav Jung extended Freud's notion of the Unconscious to also include collective archetypes—a controversial theory but one that represents a decisive move away from the earlier "bucket" theory that regarded the Unconscious largely as a garbage dump for unprocessed or repressed materials.

The idea of Collective Unconscious (which Jung also called "Objective Psyche") allowed him to regard religo-spiritual experiences as positive, life-enhancing, and in their own right valuable rather than as mere compensatory, neurotic, illusory, or delusional states. Be that as it may, neither Freud nor Jung thought it possible for the Unconscious to ever be completely converted into consciousness. Strictly speaking, this is also not the claim of Yoga. What occurs in the supraconscious ecstasy is the *eradication* of the Unconscious whereupon the adept is present only as eternal, unobstructed Awareness.

Climbing the ladder of ecstatic states means, as we have seen, gaining progressive control (*nirodha*) of the mind. In the end—that is, with the arising of the supraconscious ecstasy—the mind is emptied of every conceivable thought and object. Even the sense of conscious identity no longer manifests, and the adept has awakened as the *purusha.* This realization (which some schools of thought characterize as one of "re-cognition" or *pratyābhijna*), however, is of necessity only temporary, because the mind still contains an unconscious propensity (in the form of the subliminal-activators) to reconstitute itself as an I-centered, emergent consciousness.

Only through repeated or prolonged immersion into the state of supraconscious ecstasy is the adept able to transcend the *apparent* individuation as a discrete body-mind (i.e., as an I-centered psyche). Traditionally, it is said that when the *yogin* remains immersed in *asamprajnāta-samādhi* continuously for eighteen days does the sense of I (*asmitā*) no longer crystallize and give rise to all the intrapsychic structures that go with unenlightenment. This traditional notion, however, would seem to be somewhat arbitrary, and

other durations have also been stated. In the case of Ramana Maharshi, the transition into *asamprajnāta-samādhi* and then into liberation (*moksha*) appears to have been almost immediate. We must assume that his mind was properly prepared for the radical shift from—to use the language of Vedānta—"I-maker" (*ahamkāra*) to the transcendental *aham* ("I") of the Self (*ātman*).

At any rate, the function of the supraconscious ecstasy is the obliteration of all the *samskāras,* which can be seen as the constituent elements of the adept's Unconscious. Their erasure takes place automatically when the ecstatic mind is so purified that the *purusha* is reflected in it without distortion. If *asamprajnāta-samādhi* is maintained for an adequate length of time, the *nirodha-samskāras* overpower all the *vyutthāna-samskāras.* In other words, the habit of controlling the mind in the highest state of ecstasy is stronger than the counter-habit of reanimating lower states of mind. One type of subliminal-activator gobbles up the other type, and thus the mind consumes itself.

Many adepts do not accomplish this tremendous feat all at once but must repeatedly raise their consciousness to the level of *asamprajnāta-samādhi.* How quickly they will succeed in eliminating the subliminal-activators of emergence depends entirely on the remaining strength of those *samskāras*. If an adept has achieved great mental control but still has not won through to extreme inner dispassion (*vairāgya*), he or she is bound to be repeatedly thrown out of the state of superconscious ecstasy. Each time a new effort (which, however, should become easier over time) is needed to return to *asamprajnāta-samādhi.*

◘ Now read Chapter 22 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

THE CASE OF RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA

Well-known instances of *asamprajnāta-samādhi* (=*nirvikalpa-samādhi*) are found in the biographies of the famous nineteenth-century mystic and saint Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886) and his beloved disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), who brought Vedānta and thus Jnāna-Yoga to the West.

Ramakrishna served as a priest at the Kālī Temple at Dakshineswar (Sanskrit: Dakshineshvara) near Calcutta and was known for his eccentric behavior as a fervent worshiper of the Goddess. He was in his twenty-eighth year when he met the wandering ascetic Totapuri, who, recognizing Ramakrishna's spiritual genius, instructed him on how to realize the Divine without form. True to his devotional approach, Ramakrishna asked his "Mother's" (the Goddess's) permission to be initiated and was told that it was she herself who had brought Totapuri to him to be inducted into the philosophy and practical realization of nondualism (Advaita Vedānta).

Whenever Totapuri sought to guide his disciple to the experience of formless ecstasy (*nirvi-*

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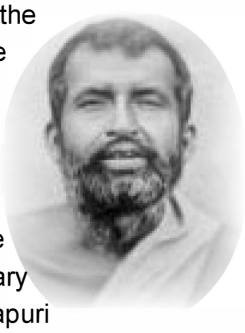
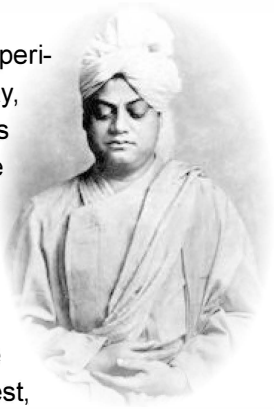
kalpa-samādhi), Ramakrishna was unable to go beyond the familiar vision of the Goddess and always promptly fell into a devotional mood. At one point, while Ramakrishna was in deep meditation, Totapuri pressed a piece of glass into the spot between the eyebrows (the location of the "third eye") and instructed his disciple to focus all his energies there. Then, when the vision of the World Mother manifested again, Ramakrishna cut the image in half and instantly entered into the sublime state of formless ecstasy. An astonished Totapuri left the room. Three days later he returned to gently bring his disciple back to ordinary consciousness. Ramakrishna had realized in a single day what had taken Totapuri forty years of diligent *sādhana*! The experience convinced Ramakrishna that all the world's religions talk about the same One. Yet, ever the devotee, he promptly returned to worshiping the Divine in the delightful form of Goddess Kālī.



His favorite disciple, Narendra (the later Swami Vivekananda) experienced *nirvikalpa-samādhi* entirely through Sri Ramakrishna's grace. One day, Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra what secret desire he was harboring in his heart to which the young Narendra responded by saying that he would like to experience the state of formless ecstasy. The saint reprimanded him for having such a selfish desire and not thinking of the welfare of others. He told Narendra that he had been born for a specific task in service of humanity. Turning to his other disciples, Ramakrishna said that he would draw a thin veil over Narendra's eyes, so that he would indeed fulfill his mission in the world. A few days later, however, he placed one of his feet on Narendra's chest, and the disciple was plunged into utter formlessness. When his ordinary consciousness re-established itself, he at first felt as though he had only a head but no body. Ramakrishna only laughed and remarked: "Let him stay in that state for a while! He has teased me long enough for it."



Sri Ramakrishna affirmed that upon emerging from the *nirvikalpa* state, the ego sense reasserts itself, which contradicts the testimony of a number of other adepts. Ramakrishna's statement, though, makes perfect sense. Unless the process of *asamprajnāta*-(or *nirvikalpa*-) *samādhi* completes itself, there is can be no permanent ego-transcending enlightenment. Yet, interestingly enough, Sri Ramakrishna and others believed that he had attained unbroken enlightenment nonetheless. One time, he was immersed in the *nirvikalpa* state for a full six months and would undoubtedly have died had not Totapuri fed him rice water every day. Still, on emerging from this state, he remarked that he would much rather taste sugar than be it. In other words, he immediately re-affirmed his role as Kālī's devotee.

Some adepts have spoken of a "phantom ego" that is established upon emerging from *asamprajnāta-samādhi*, which remains present until full enlightenment is achieved. Curiously enough, some claim that it remains present even in enlightenment. From the perspective of Patanjali's dualistic metaphysics, there can be little question that enlightenment coincides with the dissolution of both body and mind. But what about the postulation of a post-*asamprajnāta* ego? The answer must be that

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as long as there is a body-mind, there also are all the ontic categories, including "I-am-ness" (*asmitā*). We may, however, conjecture that even a one-time full immersion into the state of supraconscious ecstasy significantly changes a person's psychic makeup. This high-level realization, which temporarily eclipses the ego-identity, can be expected to have a lasting effect on the empirical personality. More specifically, *asamprajnāta-samādhi* is bound to loosen up the ego sense, so that we may speak of an attenuated ego, or an ego that is thoroughly but not completely *sāttvika* (sattvic). This kind of I-sense would indeed be a phantom, but a benign one that is motivated to uplift all beings in keeping with the *bodhisattva* vow of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As Swami Vivekananda observed about his saintly *guru:*

> In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticised anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity, that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. ("My Master," vol. 4 of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*; *www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/volume_4/vol_4_frame.htm*)

Of how many people can we say this? A pure heart is difficult to find, even within the Yoga tradition. But the fact that such beings exist should give us hope and encouragement for our own efforts on the spiritual path.

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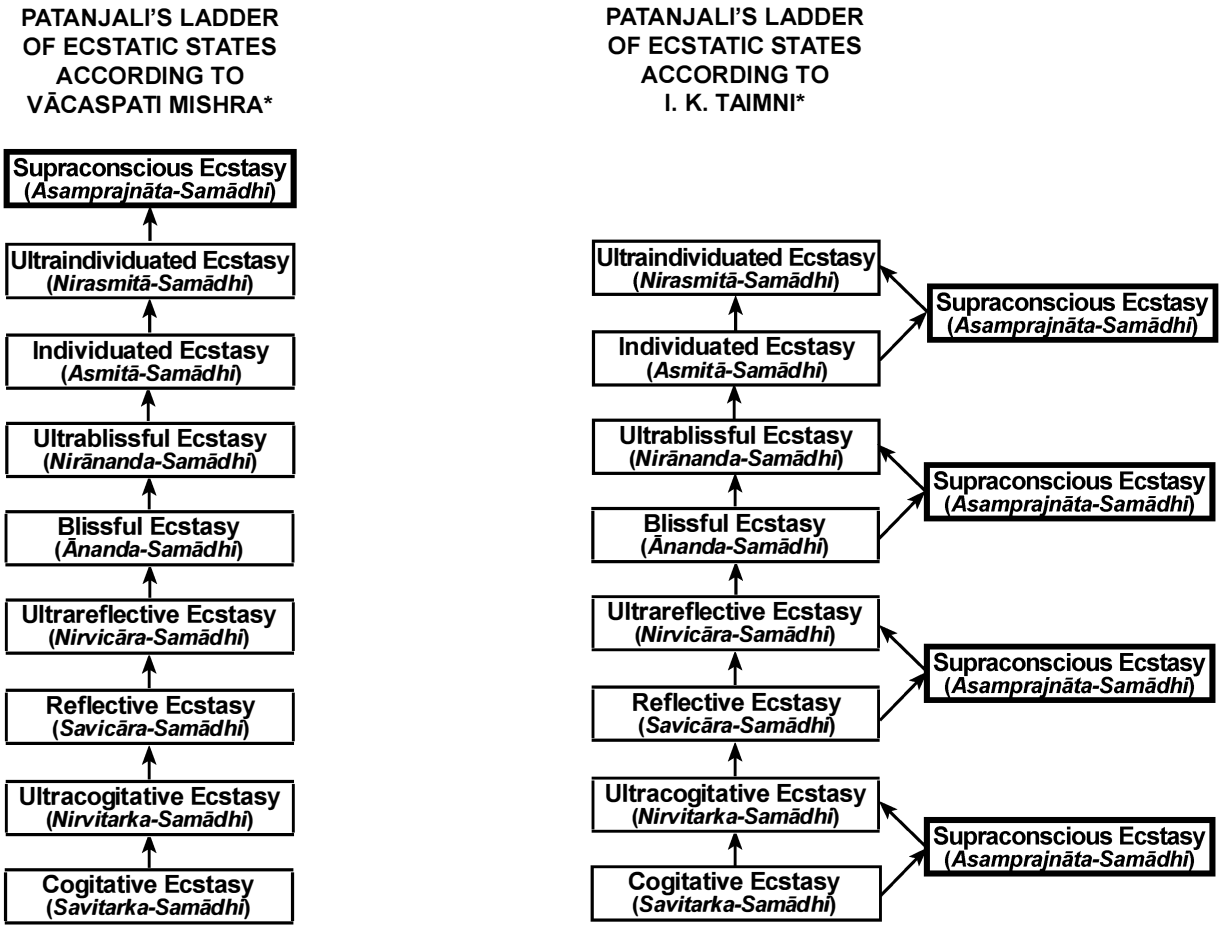
SUPRACONSCIOUS ECSTASY: ANOTHER INTERPRETATION

Some Yoga researchers, notably the Theosophist I. K. Taimni, have offered an alternative interpretation of the place and function of *asamprajnāta-samādhi* in Patanjali's framework of ecstatic states. Taimni believes that the supraconscious ecstasy is not a culminating state following upon *nirvicāra-samādhi* but a practice that the *yogin* engages whenever he wants to transition whenever he wishes to progress to the *pratyaya*-free types of ecstasy, namely *nirvitarka-, nirvicāra-, nirānanda-,* and *nirasmitā-samādhi.* Diagrammatically, this would look as follows:



*Earlier, I rejected Vācaspati Mishra's model as unconvincing

*Interesting as I. K. Taimni's model is, I do not find it plausible enough

DHARMA-MEGHA-SAMĀDHI

dharma-megha-samādhi

The Cloud of Dharma ecstasy could be called the apex of the supraconscious ecstasy or the transitional phase between *asamprajnāta-samādhi* and actual liberation, which is presumably no more than an instant.

In his *Yoga-Bhāshya* (1.2), Vyāsa seems to confused this supreme ecstatic state with what Patanjali calls "elevation" (*prasamkhyāna*), whereas this term seems to refer to the vision of discernment in the state of ultrareflective ecstasy. Although he mentions *dharma-megha-samādhi* several times, he failed to explain it, though not, I suspect, because this concept was well understood in his days but rather because he probably had no ready explanation for it. Vācaspati Mishra likewise leaves this technical term unexplained. In his *Rāja-Mārtanda* commentary (4.28), King Bhoja suggests that the Cloud of Dharma ecstasy is so called because "it irrigates the highest virtue, known as "neither white nor black" (*ashukla-krishna*) and delivers the main purpose of the psyche [i.e., liberation]."

guna-vaitrishnya

This sublime state of consciousness arises as a result of the adept's perfect dispassion toward even the vision of discernment—a complete turning away of the will from all cosmic manifestations—first referred to in aphorism 1.16 as the "nonthirsting for the qualities" (*guna-vaitrishnya*). Without this ultimate No to cosmic existence, which in a previous Lesson I have characterized as "higher dispassion" (*para-vairāgya*), liberation is impossible.

As with the supraconscious ecstasy, we cannot possibly comprehend this final process of microcosmic dissolution from the frog perspective of our ordinary intellect. The involution (*pratiprasava*) of the *gunas* is a transconceptual event. We may clumsily compare it to a few grains of powdered sugar dissolving in water more or less instantly.

We may ask: If this process coincides with liberation and liberation, according to Patanjali's dualistic metaphysics, coincides with mental and physical death, then how could Patanjali have written about it, unless he never realized it? As I suggested earlier, he may indeed have failed to attain liberation. Alternatively, if he did become liberated, his dualistic system falls short of yogic actualities.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

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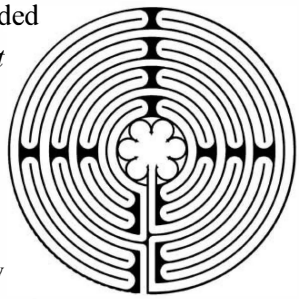
One minute spent consciously in the thought-free state is worth more than one year spent thinking.

Suggested Yoga Practice

GOING ON RETREAT



Periodic retreats from the hustle and bustle of everday life are a recommended practice in many religio-spiritual traditions. In his book *Retreat: Time Apart for Silence and Solitude,* Roger Housden mentions the fact that more and more Westerners are discovering the value of periodic spiritual retreats for de-stressing and inner renewal. Today there are well over a thousand retreat centers in North America, and not a few practitioners even travel to Eastern countries to go on retreat for longer periods. As with everything, retreats have become seriously commercialized, and, as Housden points out, they "rarely entail the intensity and privations of medieval fervor." All too often, retreats are little more than holidays without real challenges to the grasping ego. Nevertheless, the idea behind retreats is a sound one, and temporary withdrawals from everyday life are definitely worthy of emulation. Given our hectic outward-looking lives, we all are in need of periods of quiet reflection, inner relaxation, grounding, deepening, and contemplation.

Since you are taking this course, it is safe to assume that you are a householder practitioner—a *grihastha-yogin* or *grihastha-yoginī*. Therefore you could undoubtedly benefit from periodic retreats, either on your own or in a group setting. Whether you are a Christian, a disenfranchised Christian, a Jew, a non-practicing Jew, a Hindu or a Buddhist by faith, you will be able to find any number of organized group retreats. Before you sign up for one, however, I strongly recommend that you obtain some information about them from someone who has firsthand experience with that particular program. Some retreat centers also cater to those wishing to do individual retreats of their own design. If you tend to need structure, a group retreat is probably best suited for you. But if you dislike regimenting and have a clear sense of your needs and requirements, and also have a definite practice, you may want to consider an individual retreat. (Please understand that I won't be able to give further advice about this.)

I know practitioners who have made it a (positive) habit of retreating every week for at least one day. Others find it meaningful to go on monthly or quarterly retreats of several days. Yet others dedicate their entire annual vacation time to retreating. It all depends on your lifestyle and spiritual motivation. If at all possible, it is desirable to do frequent short retreats with perhaps a longer retreat once or twice a year.

Retreats are an opportunity to boost one's spiritual practice by facing oneself and tapping into the big space of Awareness. Since few of us have a naturally tranquil mind, we must expect to be challenged. In other words, retreats are not necessarily enjoyable from a conventional point of view. Often they are difficult for one reason or another, which usually has to do with the *samskāras* that are bubbling up in our mind. Then we must appreciate that inner transformation is a slow and painstaking process and develop

patience and compassion toward ourselves, without succumbing to a lackadaisical approach. For a retreat to bear positive fruit, it must have an element of fire to it. That is to say, it must be *tapas*.

Of course, to avoid becoming stressed out and turning the retreat into mere punishment, we have to observe a healthy balance between rigor and ease—the Buddha's famous Middle Path. At the end of even the most challenging retreat, we should leave with a feeling of having learned, benefited, and grown.

The best retreats are silent retreats in which the only sounds issuing from your mouth are *mantras* and prayers. Deliberate silence is wonderfully restorative, particularly when your days are ordinarily filled with the cacophony of city life.

If you have a family of young children, it might be difficult to go on retreat in your own home, but perhaps another sympathetic family member or friend who has the luxury of a quiet home is interested in hosting your retreat or even in joining you on retreat. In either case it is advisable to have clear ground rules for the duration of the retreat. Meals should not be an interruption of the retreat experience but an integral part of it. Ideally, if the retreat extends over one or two days only, the meals should be simple and easily digestible so as not to be a burden on your physical system. Sometimes it helps to prepare meals beforehand, which can then, if necessary, be warmed up.

Definitely, for the duration of the retreat, you should be out of communication with the outside world *unless* there is an emergency. This is one advantage of doing a solitary retreat away from your home environment, unless you know there will be no interruptions.

I advise against going on retreat in a state of exhaustion. Then it is much better to have a few days of good sleep and relaxation first.

If you decide on an individual retreat, be very clear about your purpose and daily program. Allow for adequate sleep and rest. On your first retreat, you might want to limit yourself to four *sādhana* session spaced out during a 24-hour cycle (morning, noon, afternoon, evening). Keep each session of meditation, *mantra* recitation, and/or prayer to c. 30 minutes. Also allow time for studying uplifting spiritual literature and introspection between each session. If your place of retreat is in a quiet and secluded environment, you might want to include a short daily walk in your program but continue the introspective mood during your walk. Perhaps learn the art of walking meditation.

Begin each session with a firm resolution (*samkalpa*), as you learned it in Lesson 13, and also repeat it whenever your find your enthusiasm flagging. It is natural for our busy monkey mind to occasionally experience boredom when all its usual props are removed. When this happens, simply consider why you have chosen to go on retreat and renew your initial motivation. If you have a feeling connection to certain masters of the Yoga tradition, past or present, you might want to ask for their help. This is anyway a good practice to cultivate.

Don't have unrealistic expectations of yourself or your retreat! Be firm but gentle with yourself. Remember the simile of the donkey who was coaxed to move on by a carrot dangling in front of his face rather than a stick. Keep everything as simple as possible.

The assignment for this lesson is to go on a **one-day retreat** and to write up your retreat experience at the end of your retreat.

For Reflection

1. How do you react to adepts who, like Zipruanna, are so steeped in the realization of the Ultimate Reality that they truly see the One everywhere, including those things that the normal person would reject and avoid as "disgusting," "revolting," and "dirty." Do you think they are taking their realization too far or do you consider them as practicing what they preach?

2. Would you consider a *yogin* who stays in *asamprajnāta-samādhi* for days on end, while leaving his body for insects to consume, as misguided or psychotic? What feelings does this sort of behavior evoke in you? Disbelief? Unease? Fear? Disapproval?

3. If ultimately there is only the One, why would Ramakrishna have preferred to worship That in the form of Kālī? Do you see this as a strength or a weakness on his part? Did his preference not merely indicate the persistence of an earlier karmic pattern?

4. Patanjali emphasized the distinction between *purusha* and *prakriti,* or more specifically between Awareness and mind. Do you feel that this kind of approach sets up an artificial barrier between Spirit and Cosmos that cannot possibly lead to the truth? Shouldn't we instead see the One in everything? Or do you think that this distinction is fundamental to all spiritual realization? How does it differ from the conventional attitude of discrimination between one thing and another?

5. Control (*nirodha*) is a key feature of the path of Classical Yoga. Do you think that this suggests an overemphasis of the will and that, perhaps, Patanjali should have focused more on surrendering to the Higher Reality, especially since he did accept the existence of *īshvara*?

6. Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda had completely different personalities. The former was highly devotional, while the latter was a great intellectual. In your opinion, would this not indicate that the Unconscious was very much in place after their respective attainments of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*? If so, what does this say about the claim that the Unconscious is cleared out by that high-level ecstasy? Should we take all such claims with a pinch of salt? Or should we revise our own notions about the human mind and the process of liberation?

7. Do you enjoy beauty (in Nature or art, etc.)? If so, would you say you are attached to what is beautiful and react against what you consider ugly? What do you make of a *yogin* who closes his eyes to the beauty around him and even seeks to aspire to a state in which *all* qualities (*guna*) of Nature and the cosmos at large are absent? Does this possibility horrify or delight you?

QUESTIONNAIRE 15

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this ring binder.)

1. Which of the following is another name for *purusha*? *(Check one*)

(a) *kartri*
(b) *drishya*
(c) *pradhāna*
(d) *svāmin*

2. Which of the following is another name for *prakriti*? *(Check one)*

(a) *anyatā*
(b) *tattva*
(c) *sva*
(d) *parināma*

3. What is another name for *sattva*? *(Check one)*

(a) *guna*
(b) *buddhi*
(c) *citta*
(d) *purusha*

4. What is the main cause of *bandha*? *(Check one)*

(a) *prakriti*
(b) *samyoga*
(c) *citta*
(d) *avidyā*

5. Who or what is named the "deliverer" by Patanjali? *(Check one)*

(a) *viveka-khyāti*
(b) *buddha*
(c) *guru*
(d) *asamprajnāta-samādhi*

6. Which of the following is the correct Sanskrit name for the *yogin* who is fully absorbed in the contemplation of the distinction between Spirit and mind? *(Check one)*

(a) *drig-drishya-yogin*
(b) *vishesha-darshin*
(c) *jnānin*
(d) *viveka-khyāti-yogin*
(e) *viveka-ānanda*

7. Which of the following is correct? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the *samskāras* start with ignorance
(b) the *samskāras* start with the emergence of the I-sense
(c) the *samskāras* are beginningless
(d) the *samskāras* result from *samyoga*
(e) the *samskāras* are countless

8. Which of the following is correct? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the *vrittis* are negated in *samādhi*
(b) the *vrittis* are a form of *pratyaya*
(c) the *prajnās* in *samādhi* are a type of *vritti*
(d) *samprajnāta-samādhi* is devoid of *pratyayas*
(e) *nirvitarka-samādhi* is liberating
(f) *savicāra-samādhi* contains *samskāras*
(g) *viveka-khyāti* arises in *asamprajnāta-samādhi*
(h) the *buddhi* is absent from ultra-cogitative ecstasy
(i) the I-sense is absent from *nirvicāra-samādhi*
(j) the I-sense is absent from *asamprajnāta-samādhi*
(k) the *kleshas* are eliminated through ultrareflective ecstasy
(l) *dharma-megha-samādhi* is also known as *prasamkhyāna*
(m) *nirbīja-samādhi* is a synonym for *nirvicāra-samādhi*
(n) supraconscious ecstasy depends on *pratyaya-nirodha*
(o) no *parināma* occurs in *nirvicāra-vaishāradya*
(p) in supraconscious ecstasy the mind is "colored" by Seer and Seen
(q) *asamprajnāta-samādhi* is inevitably liberating

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

Lesson 16
GLORIOUS FREEDOM

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Goals: *To deepen your understanding of the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is liberation, and to suggest ways in which you can kindle or stimulate your thirst for spiritual freedom*

- Born Free?
- Freedom and Karmic Necessity
- Freedom of Will
- Know Thyself!
- The Desire for Liberation
- The Disillusionment of Liberation
- En-*light*-enment
- Disembodied vs. Living Liberation
- The Paradox of Liberation
- What About the Kundalinī?
- Suggested Yoga Practice: None
- Further Reading
- "For Reflection"
- Questionnaire 16

For information about the two essays that are due upon completing this Lesson, please refer to page 380.

BORN FREE?

Freedom means different things to different people. In the nineteenth century, some African chattel slaves of North America felt they had achieved freedom when they managed to run away from their unwanted masters and hide out in the wilderness. Then, in 1895, many of them felt they had gained freedom when Abraham Lincoln ratified the thirteenth amendment to the American Constitution outlawing slavery. Yet, even though they were no longer indentured, they encountered vicious racism and often were barely treated as human beings. As late as 1954 did the Supreme Court of the United States outlaw racial segregation in public education. Nevertheless, America's African Americans are still suffering de facto inequality. How free is free? In 2004, there were eight times more African Americans in prison than whites per 100,000 people, which many take to be a clear sign that not all is well with the American judiciary system. The high level of distrust and resentment in the African American community toward the white population is understandable but also is its own form of bondage. As Martin Luther King observed in his famous 1963 speech "I Have a Dream":

> Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

Today, when we consider freedom, we often think of political freedom symbolized in the right to free speech and religious practice, and not least the right to participate in the political process through voting, etc. Two thirds of the world's population live in democratic countries of one degree or another, while one third is still subject to authoritarian and even totalitarian regimes. The problem is that even many democratic countries resort to authoritarian means (especially military might) to pursue their political and economic interests. Next there is economic freedom, which generally refers to the absence of governmental constraints on the economic process. And so on.

For those of a philosophical bent of mind, freedom means above all the right to think freely and promote understanding. Thus, in his 1784 essay *An Answer to the Question of "What is Enlightenment?"* the German philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote:

> The public use of man's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment. But by the public use of one's own reason I mean that use which anyone may make of it as a man of learning addressing the entire reading public. What I term the private use of reason is that which a person may make of it in a particular civil post or office with which he is entrusted.

But philosophers also are deeply concerned with the issue of freedom of choice, that is, the exercise of free will. Some thinkers see this as a pseudo problem. Most often, freedom is interpreted to mean freedom *from* something that is unwanted. But there also is freedom *for* something, especially the freedom to accomplish something positive for oneself and others. Freedom is not free-for-all, which is the typical interpretation by immature minds. Rather, freedom comes with great responsibility. The real question is whether we are free to choose *what* we choose.

According to the great liberation teachings of Hinduism—Yoga, Sāmkhya, and Vedānta—we are *radically* free; that is to say, we are absolutely free in our essential nature, as Spirit. We are, however, clearly not particularly free at the level of our body-mind where we are subject to all sorts of inner conditioning and outer circumstances. For instance, we cannot leap to the top of the Empire State Building or fly unaided through the air. Nor can we, ordinarily, stop our thoughts even for more than a few seconds or read someone else's mind like an open book. Moreover, unless we are born into one of the superwealthy families, we are not likely to become billionaires.

But Yoga maintains that we can in principle learn to control the mind and body to attain much greater freedom of movement than they normally demonstrate. Most importantly, we are in principle free to realize our essential nature, as Spirit, which is unlimited and not subject to the laws of Nature. The decisive qualifier here is "in principle." In actual practice, however, we find that most people are not really free to make this choice. Their will is turned toward self-replication rather than self-transcendence. Put simply, they lack the interest in cultivating the deeper potential of their body-mind, never mind realizing their inner, spiritual freedom.

Thus, while we are inherently free, we are not born free. Instead, our unconscious behavior patterns keep us locked into the experience of unfreedom, or bondage (*bandha*), within the realm of our ever-changing empirical world (*samsāra*). We find ourselves in a rather paradoxical situation, which can be compared to someone sitting in a cage whose door is unlocked, but because he is fixated on the idea of being incarcerated, he never even tries to open the door. It is literally our mind that is the cause of our bondage or freedom, our suffering or happiness. All of India's spiritual teachings are in unanimous agreement on this point.

As we apply the wisdom of Yoga in our own life, we progressively liberate ourselves from ourselves. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* (6.5–6), composed some 2,500 years ago, puts it this way:

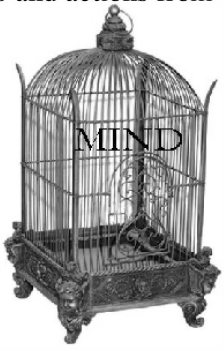
> One should uplift oneself by oneself. One should not degrade oneself.
> Oneself alone is one's friend [or] oneself alone is one's enemy.
>
> When one has conquered oneself by oneself, oneself is one's friend,
> but when one has not [conquered] oneself, oneself is like an enemy in enmity.*
>
> (*uddhared ātmanā ātmānam na ātmānam avasādayet,*
> *ātmā eva hy ātmano bandhur ātmā eva ripur ātmanah.*
>
> *bandhur ātmā ātmanas tasya yena ātmā eva ātmanā jitah,*
> *anātmanas tu shatrutve varteta ātmā eva shatruvat.*)

*Since Sanskrit does not know capital letters and also since the term *ātman* can stand for either the transcendental Self or simply oneself, this stanza lends itself to a variety of renderings. I have opted for the most obvious interpretation.

FREEDOM AND KARMIC NECESSITY

As human beings we can learn to use a computer or drive a car, but, unaided by technology, we are quite unable to fly like a bird or swim as fast as a dolphin. In other words, our human constitution makes us fit for certain activities but not for others. Thus, biology is destiny. This is another way of saying that each species has its own karmic strengths and weaknesses.

Our greatest strength is the ability to deeply inspect our particular destiny and realize that while we have certain inbuilt limitations, we also have, as human being, a peculiar capacity for going beyond our karmic conditioning by transferring our sense of identity from the body-mind to Spirit-Awareness. This is the capacity for conscious spiritual discipline. However severe our psychophysical limitations may be, we can gradually extend our range of autonomy by exercising our will through ever greater degrees of self-control. As we assume responsibility for our mental activity, we strengthen our will and in turn enjoy increasing freedom of self-determination. Practically speaking, we can turn our thoughts and actions from being demeritorious (*apunya*) to being meritorious (*punya*). This, in turn, changes the quality of our mind and thus our potential for improving our karmic lot.



At the beginning of the spiritual path, a person might find it impossible to think kindly of his or her actual or imaginary enemies, even if he or she agrees that forgiveness and kindness are desirable traits. However, with regular self-transcending practice comes an increasing ability to deal with previously difficult situations in a spiritual way. A spiritual practitioner becomes more and more able to accept and face bravely any adverse karma that cannot be avoided, to energetically go about changing whatever karma can be modified by

Freedom of Will

Without free will in spiritual things the human being can in no wise advance into light, i.e., into truths and goods of the church, or procure himself a life. Without that free will he would not be a human being but only a figure and a phantom. For his thought would be without reflection, consequently without judgment and thus in Divine things which are of the Church he would have no more ability to turn than a door without a hinge, or with one fastened with a bolt of steel. His will, too, would be devoid of decision, hence no more active towards justice or injustice than the stone on the mound under which lies a dead body. . .

—Emanual Swedenborg, *Coronis*

wise and virtuous action, and to lay down positive karmic pathways for the future.

The goal of Yoga, however, is not merely to create positive karmic circumstances for ourselves but to transcend karmic necessity altogether by realizing our true essence—the *purusha*. Karma will always exist at the level of *prakriti*. You could say that karma and *prakriti* are synonymous, just as freedom and *purusha* are synonymous. *Prakriti* with all its natural laws amounts to frozen karma.

As long as we identify with the Cosmos or any of its aspects, we inevitably become subject to its laws. When we cease to so identify, we enjoy the freedom of Spirit. In the latter case, we potentially even rise beyond the karmic patterns of the Cosmos while being embodied. I say "potentially," because in their freedom many, if not most, realized masters refrain from actively interfering with the karmic workings of the Cosmos (especially its natural laws) unless there is a "good reason" for doing so. A good reason, for instance, would be to help someone spiritually. As I understand it, masters may at times defer the ripening of a disciple's karma in order to make it possible for him or her to gather sufficient spiritual momentum to experience karmic backlash with appropriate courage or in a symbolic rather than literal manner. Rarely, however, will they exonerate a disciple from harvesting what he or she has sown.

There are two possible reasons for their judicious attitude. First, the masters know that personal experience is a most powerful teacher, especially when it comes with a degree of discomfort. As the German mystic Eckhart observed: "The swiftest steed to bear you to your goal is suffering." Second, the great adepts, who are by virtue of their enlightenment attuned to the deeper rhythm of the Cosmos, know that a rock thrown into a pond causes far-reaching ripples. Wisdom dictates that any significant interference in the karmic workings of the world is bound to cause a major upheaval, which would only lead to greater complications and suffering. To proffer a practical example from everyday life: It is better to offer a beggar a job than money (which is all too easily converted to alcohol). A job (along with other appropriate practical help) would give the beggar an opportunity to change his or her life in a positive manner, whereas a money offering, however generous, in most cases would merely perpetuate the often self-chosen state of penury and misery.

> The working of *karma* is wholly dispassionate, just, neither cruel nor merciful. Though we cannot escape from the workings of this principle, there is hope, for if man is what he has made of himself, he may make himself what he will. Even the soul in the lowest condition need not abandon all hope. If we miss the right path, we are not doomed to an eternity of suffering. There are other existences by which we can grow into the knowledge of the Infinite Spirit with the complete assurance that we will ultimately arrive there. . . .
>
> The future of the soul is not finally determined by what it has felt, thought and done in this one earthly life. The soul has chances of acquiring merit and advancing to life eternal. Until the union with the timeless Reality is attained, there will be some form of life or other, which will give scope to the individual soul to acquire enlightenment and attain life eternal.
>
> —Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads,* pp. 114-115

KNOW THYSELF!

ātmānam viddhi

gnothi se auton

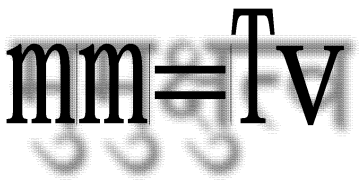
Above the portal of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi the inscription *Gnothi se auton*—"Know Thyself!"—could be found. Various Sanskrit scriptures contain the same solemn injunction: *ātmānam viddhi.* Yoga is India's answer to it, for it was designed by the seers and sages to lead its practitioners to ever more profound self-understanding. At the culmination of this process, the true (or transcendental) Self (*ātman*), Spirit, shines forth without the least distortion by the conceptual mind. This event of Self-realization is what is also known as liberation or enlightenment. It coincides with the deep recognition that there is in fact no self (or ego), as previously held with the utmost conviction. From Patanjali's perspective, the self is a finite phenomenon of the machinery of the Cosmos (*prakriti*). But this recognition dawns on us gradually through intensive spiritual work.

That our beloved sense of self (*asmitā*)—or what in the Sāmkhya and Vedānta traditions is also called "I-maker" (*ahamkāra*)—is largely illusory becomes first obvious in deep meditation and in the ecstatic state (*samādhi*) where the boundary between subject and object melts away. In the supraconscious ecstasy, finally, the ego-sense is conspicuous by its absence. We awaken, if only temporarily, to our true nature as Spirit (*purusha*). This awakening is Self-knowledge at the highest level, for it implies transcendence of the false self (*mithyā-ātman*). Every shred of self-understanding prior to this event still belongs to the realm of *prakriti.* Yet, this limited self-understanding still is useful to the extent that it can point us in the direction of true Self-knowledge (that is, Self-realization).

For instance, when we finally understand that things do not ever give us lasting happiness but that we can find such happiness only within ourselves, we have taken an important step on the path of self-understanding. Similarly, when we realize that we need not fear the death of our physical body because we are not identical with it, we have gained a crucial insight about ourselves, for it can then prompt us to investigate further and discover the true nature of that which survives physical death.

Mulla Nasruddin was getting ready to ride out of town with a pack of eight donkeys. Sitting on one of the animals, he counted only seven donkeys. Worried that one of the animals had gone astray, he jumped to the ground and was glad to count all eight. But after climbing back onto his own animal, he again counted only seven. He was completely consternated by the discrepancy, until a good-natured bystander pointed out to him that he kept forgetting to count the animal under him.

THE DESIRE FOR LIBERATION



mumukshutva

With the exception of the desire for liberation—which is called *mumukshutva* in the Vedānta tradition—all our desires bind us to *samsāra.* They bring us pleasures, even knowledge, but they cannot free us from spiritual ignorance. More often than not, they lead to disappointment, unhappiness, and suffering.

As we experience the undesirable side effects of our world-bound desires, we gradually come to yearn for lasting peace and happiness, which is the dawning of the desire for liberation. But to strengthen *mumukshutva* (derived from the verbal root *muc,* "to be free"), we must first have insight into the very possibility of attaining freedom from ignorance and suffering. Then, as we shed our attachment to mundane pleasures, we will increasingly find solace in spiritual realizations and thus fan the desire for liberation more and more.

Of course, at the outset of the yogic path, the desire for liberation is likely to be shot through with all kinds of egoic (impure) motivations, which we must jettisoned as soon as we become aware of them. Thus, the notion "I want to be free" is itself a product of self-will (*abhimāna*), or arrogance, and as such unworthy of our cultivation. As long as the ego-sense (*asmitā*) is alive in us, our desire for liberation is bound to be impure, and therefore we must always remain alert to the ego lurking in everything we think and do.

In a way, the desire for liberation is the very first obstacle that we must overcome, because in our spiritual benightedness, we are apt to interpret it as an attainment for ourselves, as something the ego can

THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF LIBERATION

We must allow ourselves to be disappointed, which means the surrendering of me-ness, my achievement. We would like to watch ourselves attain enlightenment, watch our disciples celebrating, worshipping, throwing flowers at us, with miracles and earthquakes occurring and gods and angels singing and so forth. This never happens. The attainment of enlightenment from ego's point of view is extreme death, the death of self, the death of me and mine, the death of the watcher. It is the ultimate and final disappointment. Treading the spiritual path is painful. It is a constant unmasking, peeling off of layer after layer of masks. It involves insult after insult.

—Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation,* pp. 5–6

possess. The beginner is likely to pride himself with his newly won interest in liberation and the spiritual path and may even indulge in a useless "holier than thou" attitude. This is just an ego game.

And whenever inattention (*pramāda*) gets the better of us and we fail to see through the ego's numerous guises and ruses, our spiritual work is hindered. Without exception, the Yoga scriptures emphasize the virtue of constant vigilence (*apramāda*).

EN-*LIGHT*-ENMENT

Since time immemorial, the Ultimate Reality has been spoken of as "Light," or "primordial Light." In his book *The Unfolding Self,* Ralph Metzner delves into the metaphorical use of light in the world's religio-spiritual traditions. We learn that physical light comes closest to the immaterial, omnipresent, and illuminating nature of Spirit. Many mystical experiences include luminosity as a striking feature, giving the unwary reader the wrong impression that Spirit itself is light, which would be confusing a linguistic metaphor with transcendental Reality. Spirit has no definable characteristics other than that it is in fact undefinable. It is unqualified (*nirguna*), that is, beyond the three types of *gunas.* Whatever we can say about it is at best a half truth.

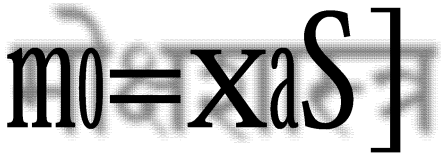
Yet, it is somewhat helpful for the conventional mind to apply the metaphor of light to Spirit. Thus we can say that the *purusha,* while not actually connected with the cosmic realm (*prakriti*) nevertheless shines its light into the structures of the cosmos, notably its most refined matter, which is the higher mind (*buddhi*). The higher mind is singularly suited to reflect the *purusha's* light, especially when the mind has been trained properly and therefore has achieved a superlative degree of purity or *sattva.*

bodhi

It is no accident that the goal of Yoga—liberation—is also referred to as "enlightenment": en-*light*-enment. The same word play can be found in the Latin-based term "illumination," which is derived from the noun *lumen* meaning "light." The Sanskrit word for this is *bodhi,* which stems from the same verbal root *budh* (meaning both "to be aware" and "to be awake") that also allows us to form the terms *buddhi* and *buddha*. Both connotations of the root *budh* imply the presence of the "light" of consciousness. Some people distinguish between liberation (which they see as perfect disembodiment) and enlightenment (which requires a body), but this distinction is not especially convincing. It makes sense, however, to distinguish between ultimate (post-mortem) liberation (*videha-mukti*), or what the Buddhists call *parinirvāna,* and living liberation or *jīvan-mukti.*

> One gains wisdom by which the ocean of existence (*samsāra-ārnava*) is destroyed. Therefore, verily, by knowing this, the state of liberation (*kaivalya*) is attained; [indeed,] the state of liberation is attained.
>
> —*Kaivalya-Upanishad* 25

DISEMBODIED VS. LIVING LIBERATION



moksha-shāstra

Yoga is a liberation teaching (*moksha-shāstra*), and it is this feature which gives it its superlative significance. Humanity's creative elite has produced literally thousands of teaching, or theories, about existence or aspects of existence—from philosophical and theological systems to moral theories and all sorts of scientific models. History has shown that many of them were either entirely wrong or at least partially incorrect. All of them, with the exception of liberation teachings, are designed to cater to humanity's engagement with the conditional world (*samsāra*). Only teachings concerned with spiritual liberation (*moksha, mukti, kaivalya, apavarga*, etc.) have a transcendental purpose, namely to realize our authentic being, as Spirit (*purusha, ātman*).

Like most other theories, liberation teachings are assessed by their effectiveness, and Yoga in its totality obviously has served numerous truth seekers very well, for history remembers numerous great adepts (*mahā-siddha*) who have attained to the state of freedom. We should not allow ourselves to be distracted by the fact that Yoga comes in many varieties and that not all of its explanations or even techniques may stand the test of time. It has, however, articulated lasting truths that hold great importance for any endeavor to discover our true nature.

Traditionally, the diverse forms and branches of Yoga have been viewed as complementary pathways to the same ultimate Reality (*parama-tattva*) rather than as competing and mutually exclusive systems. Each type of Yoga is said to serve a particular personality type. Thus Karma-Yoga is for the action-oriented individual, Rāja-Yoga for the person with a penchant for mental activity, Bhakti-Yoga for the more emotional personality, and Hatha-Yoga for the individual inclined toward the physical body, and so forth. Thus tradition sees Yoga as an integrated spectrum of teachings (comprising both theory and practice).

All forms of Yoga acknowledge that spiritual liberation is the highest and most worthy goal of human existence. They differ somewhat in their interpretation of what liberation means. The theistic schools, for instance, regard liberation as a state of communion with the Ultimate, which they envision as a Divine Personality (*purushottama*). Nondualist Jnāna-Yoga, again, interprets liberation as the realization of the perfect identity of the transcendental Self (*ātman*) with the transcendental Ground of existence, or *brahman.* Patanjali understands liberation, as the term *kaivalya* ("aloneness") suggests, as the realization of the intrinsic isolation of Spirit (*purusha*) from the Cosmos (*prakriti*).

The important concept of *kaivalya* occurs five times in the *Yoga-Sūtra* (viz. 2.25, 3.50, 3.55, 4.26, and 4.34). Aphorisms 2.25 and 4.26 were treated in Lesson 15, which leaves the other three instances to be discussed here.

3.50: TAD-VAIRĀGYĀD API DOSHA-BĪJA-KSHAYE KAVAILYAM

"Through dispassion toward even this [exalted state of *nirvicāra-vaishāradya*], with the dwindling of the seeds of the defects, [the *yogin* attains in due course] the 'aloneness' [of the power of seeing].."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.50 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

NOTE: I have slightly rephrased the above aphorism to make it more intelligible.

All activity that does not spring from profound wisdom (*prajnā*) based on yogic discernment (*viveka*) leads to karmic involvement in *samsāra.* In other words, that activity is inherently defective. Its defects (*dosha*) consist in associated mental states of delusion (*moha*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), and so on, which all spring from spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*) and egoism (*asmitā*). The seeds (*bīja*) of these defects are the karmic propensities (*samskāra*) lying await in the Unconscious, or what Patanjali refers to as the depth-memory (*smriti*). These are uprooted in the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), which ensues when the *yogin* consciously lets go of any attachment to the high-level experience of insight (*prajnā*) in the ultrareflexive ecstasy (*nirvicāra-samādhi*).

With sustained immersion into the state of supraconscious ecstasy, the *yogin's* utterly transformed mind is spontaneously borne on toward liberation.

3.55: SATTVA-PURUSHAYOH SHUDDHI-SĀMYE KAIVALYAM ITI

"With [the attainment of] equality in purity of the *sattva* and Spirit, the 'aloneness' [of the power of seeing is established]. Finis (*iti*)."

◘ Now read my commentary on aphorism 3.55 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*

Patanjali offers two definitions of *kaivalya* in his work. Aphorism 3.55 explains it as a state of equivalent purity between Spirit (which is ever pure) and the *yogin's* transmuted mind (which is completely *sattvified*). That is to say, the mind has become so pure that it effectively presents no longer an interference pattern. It is like a highly polished mirror. As the *Yoga-Bhāshya* (3.55) states, in this sublime state of realization, the mind is devoid of all *rajas* and *tamas* and is even devoid of any unconscious contents. Strictly speaking, we may argue, it does not exist at all. For, if the cosmic matrix (*prakriti-pradhāna*) is defined as the perfect balance between the three types of primary qualities (*guna*)—*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*—then a purely *sattvic* mind is not possible.

Nevertheless, some interpreters of the *Yoga-Sūtra* have insisted that the definition of *kaivalya* given in 3.55 suggests that Patanjali believed that liberation is possible in the embodied state, with a totally purified mind. This is indeed a possibility granted by many other liberation teachings, notably

Advaita-Vedānta, but it would, in my opinion, violate Patanjali's dualistic metaphysics according to which Spirit and Cosmos are eternally separate. Thus, realization of our Spirit-Identity logically implies the perfect transcendence of the body-mind. Concretely, Spirit-realization coincides with the death of the physical vehicle *and* the mind.

Although logic dictates that when all *samskāras* are eradicated, physical death and mental extinction are imminent, this does not appear to have been the position, for instance, of Īshvara Krishna, the author of the *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* (circa fourth century A.D.). Despite his radical dualist metaphysics, he seems to have subscribed to the ideal of living liberation (*jīvan-mukti*). Thus in stanza 67 of his text, we can read:

> By attaining perfect knowledge (*samyag-jnāna*), virtue, and so on, and upon reaching [karmic] neutrality [lit. "noncausation," *akārana*], Spirit remains associated with a body by force of subliminal-activators (*samskāra*), like a whirling [potter's] wheel [that revolves from sheer momentum].

This explanation corresponds to the standard interpretation of Vedānta. Given Īshvara Krishna's stance, it is conceivable that Patanjali likewise favored the ideal of living liberation, but we cannot tell for certain. In considering this matter, we must also bear in mind that he lived at least two centuries prior to the author of the *Sāmkhya-Kārikā*.

My own preference is to assume that Patanjali, true to his radical dualism, opted for the ideal of disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*). In light of this, aphorism 3.55 can be understood as a preliminary definition, with a stricter definition being furnished in *sūtra* 4.34.

4.34: PURUSHA-ARTHA-SHŪNYĀNĀM GUNĀNĀM PRATIPRASAVAH KAIVALYAM SVA-RŪPA-PRATISHTHĀ VĀ CITI-SHAKTIR ITI

"The process-of-involution (*pratiprasava*) of the *gunas,* devoid of purpose for the Self, is [what is called] 'aloneness' [of the power of seeing], or the establishment of the power of Awareness in [its] own-form. Finis."

- Now read my commentary on aphorism 4.34 in *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali.*
  NOTE: The nominative *shaktih* becomes *shaktir* because of the following *i* sound.

As explained in Lesson 4, the three primary qualities (*guna*) make up absolutely everything at any level of cosmic existence (*prakriti*). This includes our environment, the physical body, and the mind in its various subtle layers. Through the all-consuming action of the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*), these *gunas* are dissolved **relative to** our specific microcosm (that is, relative to our own body-mind). Their dissolution (*laya*) is pictured as a flowing back, or process-of-involution (*pratiprasava*) into the cosmic matrix, which is sheer potentiality. We can compare this to salt granules (the *gunas*) dissolving completely in clear water (the cosmic matrix). "Our" liberation, in effect, liberates a piece of the macrocosm. In fact, this

is the only kind of liberation possible, for the transcendental Spirit is always already free. In the *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* (59–61), we find the following striking metaphor:

> Just as a dancer, after having presented herself to the audience, ceases to dance, so does the *Prakriti*, after having revealed herself to Spirit, cease [to so present herself].
>
> By diverse means the generous (*upakārinī*) [*Prakriti*], which is without purpose of her own and is composed of the *gunas,* pursues the purpose (*artha*) of the ungenerous Spirit (*pums*) devoid of *gunas.*
>
> In my opinion, there is nothing more coy than *Prakriti* who, recognizing "I have been seen," does not come again into the purview (*darshana*) of Spirit.

The above passage, which utilizes imagery from the theatrical arts, portrays the Cosmos as a coy dancer adorned with fine qualities (*guna*). Spirit, the ultimate witness or spectator (*sākshin*), eternally looks on as the Cosmos performs its endless dance. At one point, the cosmic dancer feels noticed by this timeless spectator and shyly withdraws from his presence, leaving him alone forever.

Now, the term "aloneness"—which stems from *kevala* meaning "alone"—needs to be qualified. Who or what is alone? The answer is unquestionably: Spirit. We can understand *kaivalya* as the opposite pole of *samyoga,* which is freedom from the "correlation" between Spirit and Cosmos that pertains as long as the mind exists in an unenlightened state. *Kaivalya* is *asamyoga* or *viyoga,* that is, the disjunction of *purusha* and *prakriti.*

In aphorism 2.25, Patanjali more specifically speaks of the "aloneness" of "[the sheer power of] seeing" (*drishi kaivalyam*). We know from *sūtra* 2.20 that "sheer seeing" (*drishi-mātra*) is a synonym of

THE PARADOX OF LIBERATION

Spirit is eternally free. It is the mind that feels itself to be bound or liberated. Spirit is never confused, never attached to a body-mind. The process of liberation occurs entirely within the complexities of our mind or psyche. As the *Sāmkhya-Sūtra* (3.71) states:

> **Spirit does not really have bondage or liberation except through lack of discernment (*aviveka*).**

In the *Sāmkhya-Kārikā* (62), the same assertion is made:

> **Therefore, Spirit is not at all bound, transmigrating (*samsarati*), or liberated. The Cosmos, however, supporting diverse [subtle and coarse forms], is bound, transmigrating, or liberated.**

drashtri, the "Seer," which is none other than Spirit. The qualifying phrase "power of seeing" (*drishi-shakti*) can be deduced from aphorism 2.23, where Patanjali speaks of the two powers—that of the "owned" (*sva*) and that of the "owner" (*svāmin*), meaning Cosmos and Spirit respectively.

To describe Spirit (*purusha*) as a "Seer" is of course a metaphor. Spirit neither sees nor does not see. Rather, our essential Identity is one of total Awareness, which, when no mind is presented to it, exists in an unimaginable condition of freedom.

Even saying what I have just said is already saying too much. Ludwig Wittgenstein was right when stating in his famous *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (7): "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

- Now read Chapters 23 and 28 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*
- Next read Essay #78 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*

WHAT ABOUT THE KUNDALINĪ?

kundalinī-shakti

Western Yoga students who have been exposed to the teachings of Hatha-Yoga, often want to know whether liberation/enlightenment depends on the awakening of the serpent power (*kundalinī-shakti*) and whether Patanjali taught anything about this. This concept belongs very much to the Tantric heritage of which Hatha-Yoga must be considered an important part. According to the masters of this highly diversified tradition, there can be no liberation/enlightenment without a fully aroused serpent power, which is the microcosmic (personal) aspect of the cosmic Power (*mahā-shakti*), the counterpole to transcendental Awareness (*cit* = Shiva).

We find no reference to the *kundalinī* doctrine in Patanjali's work, presumably because it had not yet been formulated. Patanjali lived prior to the emergence of Tantra about 400 or 500 A.D. If he was familiar with the *experience* of *kundalinī* awakening, he still lacked an appropriate conceptual framework for it.

- Now read Essay #75 in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga.*
- Next read Chapter 30 in *Wholeness or Transcendence?*.

Suggested Yoga Practice

Because of the time allowed for writing the two essays required in this course, there is no Suggested Yoga Practice in this Lesson, though you might want to do another retreat.

FURTHER READING

The books, articles, and CDs cited in this section are not obligatory, but you may find them useful to consult in your further studies. Don't forget to support your local independent bookstore.

Chodron, Yeshe. *Everyday Enlightenment: How to be a Spiritual Warrior at the Kitchen Sink.* New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Harvey, Peter. *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism.* London/ New York: RoutledgeCurzon, repr. 2004.

Kornfield, Jack. *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry: How the Heart Grows Wise on the Spiritual Path.* New York: Bantam, 2001.

Larkin, Geri. *Stumbling Toward Enlightenment.* Berkeley, Calif.: Celestial Arts, 1997.

McKenna, Jed. *Spiritual Enlightenment: The Damndest Thing.* Iowa City: Wisefool Press, 2002.

_____. *Spiritually Incorrect Enlightenment.* Iowa City: Wisefool Press, 2004.

Metzner, Ralph. *The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience.* Novato, Calif.: Origin Press, rev. ed. 1998.

Pandit, Moti Lal. *Towards Transcendence: A Historico-Analytical Study of Yoga as a Method of Liberation.* New York: Intercultural Publications [Ford Foundation], 1991.

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Principal Upaniṣads.* Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, repr. 1992.

Trungpa, Chögyam. *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation.* Berkeley, Calif.: Shambhala, 1976.

White, John, ed. *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment.* New York: Paragon House, 1990.

_____, ed. *What Is Enlightenment? Exploring the Goal of the Spiritual Path.* New York: Paragon House, 1995.

For Reflection

1. What does freedom mean to you personally? Has this been an important theme in your life? Do you associate freedom with happiness and a meaningful existence? If not, why not?

2. Do you seek to promote freedom in your relationships with family members, friends, and coworkers? Do you, for instance, allow others to freely express their feelings and thoughts, or do you tend toward authoritarianism?

3. Do you believe that the pursuit of freedom calls for great emotional and intellectual maturity and that most people are incapable of a truly free life, precisely because they are lacking such maturity? Are you excluding yourself from this group? If so, which character qualities justify you in doing so?

4. Do you find the yogic ideal of spiritual realization *beyond* all cosmic existence unappealing? Do you, perhaps, feel that we must gain inner freedom in the midst of an active life in the world? If so, is this view a product of your mundane desires and attachments? Or is it based entirely on philosophical considerations?

5. Are you capable of uplifting yourself in times of adversity? Or do you tend to succumb to unhappiness or even depression? How does the ideal of inner freedom mesh with your characteristic reactions to life's challenges?

6. Do you ever feel that life is out of your control and that larger forces are at work that either help or hinder your designs? Do you believe the maxim that "Man proposes and God disposes"? Do you think that this saying expresses an idea similar to the Indian *karma* doctrine?

7. In your estimation, on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the most extreme), how firmly anchored is the I-sense (asmitā) in your own personality? (Bear your motivations, emotions, and thoughts in mind when making your assessment.) Ask three of those closest to you to give you their appraisal of your egocentric tendencies as well. Do give them permission to be honest with you and also to take into account that their responses are bound to be biased like your own.

8. What, in your opinion, are your chances of creating a life for yourself in which the spiritual impulse is strong enough to enjoy the cultivation of the yogic path more than the pleasurable experiences derived from all sorts of worldly activities?

QUESTIONNAIRE 16

(Do **NOT** submit this particular Questionnaire but check your answers against the key provided at the back of this ring binder.)

1. What is the *literal* meaning of *ātman*? *(Check one)*

(a) transcendental Self
(b) Spirit
(c) oneself
(d) Identity

2. What is meant by *mithyā-ātman*? *(Check one)*

(a) finite self
(b) infinite Self
(c) true Self
(d) false self

3. What is meant by *samsāra-ārnava*? *(Check one)*

(a) the ocean of conditioned existence
(b) the limitation of conditioned existence
(c) the transcendence of *samsāra*
(d) a particular level of conditioned existence

4. To which of the following terms is *mumukshutva* most closely related? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *mukha*
(b) *mukti*
(c) *moksha*
(d) *kshura*
(e) *mumūrshā*

5. Which of the following characterizations can be said to apply to *kaivalya*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) *nirguna*
(b) *sattva*
(c) *mukta*
(d) *aparināma*
(e) *akāla*

6. What is meant by *pratiprasava*? *(Check one or more)*

(a) process of involution
(b) the mind flowing (*prasava*) toward liberation
(c) the negation of *prakriti*
(d) the dissolution of cosmic manifestation

7. Which of the following describes the state of *videha-mukti* according to Patanjali? *(Check one or more)*

(a) the *vrittis* are suspended
(b) concentration is perfect
(c) the body-mind is transcended
(d) the mind is in a state of *sattva*
(e) *viveka-khyāti* is absolute
(f) *prakriti* continues to exist
(g) the Cosmos is dissolved

The above questions are based not only on the materials in this binder but also on the various assigned readings.

Please don't just look up the answers but try to answer the questions based on what you remember of your studies!

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ESSAYS

To qualify for our *Certificate of Completion* for this 250-hour course, you must have submitted all necessary questionnaire assignments, as well as any other homework requested by your tutor. In addition, you must now submit the following two essays:

1. A 4,000-word essay on any aspect of Classical Yoga, which should demonstrate your comprehension of the course materials. Please consult with your tutor before selecting a topic.

2. A 1,500-word essay that explains how this course has affected you in a practical way. Your responses to the "For Reflection" questions should readily enable you to write this second essay.

For submission instructions, kindly refer to page 3 of the Introduction to this manual.

Key to Questionnaires

Please note that this Key includes only those questionnaires that are NOT to be submitted to TYS.

Questionnaire 1

1. (b)

2. (b)

3. (c)

4. (b)

5. The cosmic serpent Shesha (or Ananta)

6. Stability (*sthira*) and ease (*sukha*)

7. (a), (d), (e), and (f)

8, (f) and (g) and possibly (h)

9. (e)

10. (b) and (c)

Questionnaire 2

1. (c) and (d)

2. (b), (c), and (e)

3. (c), if the beginnings are dated back to the Vedic era.

4. (d)

5. *Vritti-nirodha, prajnā-nirodha, samskāra-nirodha*, and *sarva-nirodha*.

6. (d)

7. Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna (or Tantrayāna)

8. (b), (c), and (d). While the lower mind (*manas*) functions primarily as a processing station for sensory input (via the brain and nervous system) and is itself regarded as as one of the ten senses (*indriya*), the higher mind (*buddhi*) is the seat of the will and the organ of wisdom (*prajnā*).

9. all of them

10. (b), (c), and (e)

Questionnaire 3 (to be submitted to TYS)

Questionnaire 4

1. (c)
2. (b) to which is added the *purusha* as a metacosmic principle.
3. (b)
4. (a) and (d)
5. (b), (d) and (e)
6. (d) and (e)
7. (a), (b), (d) because it involves the mind, and (f)
8. (a), (c) because of the paucity of matter, (d), (e), (g), and (h)

Questionnaire 5

1. (c)
2. (d)
3. (c)
4. (d)
5. (a)
6. (e)
7. (d)
8. (a)

Questionnaire 6

1. (a)
2. (c)
3. (a)
4. (b) and (f)
5. (c), (f), (h), (i) which holds true even of the emotion-oriented path of Bhakti-Yoga, (j), (k), and (l); please note that the goal is not entirely identical in all branches, though it is generally known as liberation.
6. (d)

7. (d); if you checked (e), please note that Hatha-Yoga is never equated with Tantra but definitely is a manifestation within the Tantric heritage.

8. (a); suffering caused by higher beings or fate.

Questionnaire 7 (to be submitted to TYS)

Questionnaire 8

1. (e)

2. (d); see *Wholeness or Transcendence?,* p. 119.

3. (b); see *Wholeness or Transcendence?,* p. 128.

4. (d)

5. (d)

6. (b), (c), and (d). Please note that "Self" refers here to Spirit rather than the lower self (ego/mind).

7. (d)

8. (a) and (d)

9. (a) and (d)

10. (b) and (d)

Questionnaire 9

1. (d)

2. none, actually!

3. (d). *Shava-āsana* is strictly a relaxation posture. *Danda-āsana* can be utilized as a meditation posture, providing there is support for the back. *Padma-* and *siddha-āsana* are favored meditation postures.

4. (b)

5. (a)

6. (a)

7. (a) in aphorism 2.47 and (c) in aphorism 2.34

8. (c). If you also checked (g), this is merely a side effect of properly executed *āsana.* If you checked (b), then bear in mind my comments about *sukha* meaning "easeful" rather than "comfortable."

9. (c) and (d) which is another name for *prāna-maya-kosha*

10. (d)

Questionnaire 10

1. (e)

2. (c)

3. (d)

4. (d); see *Wholeness or Transcendence?,* p. 140.

5. (a) and (d)

6. (b) and (c), both because the *hamsa* relates to the life breath.

7. (d)

8. (a)

9. (b) in some contexts and (d)

10. (a), (b) and (d)

Questionnaire 11 (to be submitted to TYS)

Questionnaire 12

1. (d)

2. (a)

3. (d)

4. (b) and (d)

5. (c) and (d)

6. (c) and (e)

7. (b), (c), and (e)

8. Discernment (*viveka*) is the very essence of yogic practice (*abhyāsa*). It allows us to distinguish between what is real (that is, conducive to liberation) and what is unreal (that is, promotive of our continued involvement in *samsāra*. Specifically, it helps us isolate all those aspects of our being that belong to our conditioned personality as opposed to Spirit-Awareness. In the emotional realm, we are particularly prone to identifying with the false identity of the ego, and therefore we must cultivate great vigiliance (i.e., discernment) especially in emotional states in which *rajas* and *tamas* are strongly accented. Sustained discernment favors *sattvic* states of mind, such as serenity and peace.

9. Several theories of the Unconscious are present in modern psychology. Often (especially in Freudian psychology), the Unconscious is seen as a dumping ground with more or less "radioactive" garbage that spills over into our daily life, manifesting in neuroses and psychoses. While Yoga appreciates that the Un-

conscious contains much forgotten or repressed material that then manifests in undesirable mental states, it also conceives of the possibility that through deliberate mind training, the Unconscious can be fertilized by more positive forces that then lead to more desirable mental states. The single most important difference between Yoga and modern psychology is that Yoga affirms the possibility of rendering the Unconscious completely conscious and thereby disabling all the unconscious (karmic) traces.

10. The cultivation of positive emotions, like love and compassion, is desirable on two counts. First, when we invest energy in cultivating positive emotions, we naturally have less energy for indulging in negative emotions, which create "black" karma. Gradually, we become able to eliminate negative emotions from our life altogether. Second, when we train our mind to animate only positive emotions, we not only create "white" karma but also promote the kind of inner environment in which the virtue of discernment (*viveka*) can arise, which is a *sattvic* quality. That is to say, we can begin to truly transcend the mind itself, which is a precondition for enlightenment. Thus, the cultivation of positive emotions is both morally and spiritually desirable.

Questionnaire 13

1. (d)

2. (a)

3. (d)

4. (c), in the sense of manifestation of power or splendor.

5. (d)

6. (b)

7. (a)

8. (c) and (d)

9. (a) and (c)

10. The traditional Vedāntic explanation is that the "fourth state," or "Fourth," is in fact identical with Self-realization, and as such it is the same as the transcendental Self.

11. According to the *Yoga-Sūtra* (3.18), the technical term of this paranormal feat is *pūrva-jāti-jnāna,* or "knowledge of [one's] previous birth(s)." This is also known as *pūrva-janma-jnāna,* which means exactly the same thing.

12. When *yogins* speak of the heart, they generally do not refer to the physical organ but either to the *hridaya-* or *anāhata-cakra* located along the bodily axis at the level of the chest or to what some call the "spiritual heart" at the right side of the chest. Since ancient times, the nonorganic heart has been a favorite locus (*desha*) for attention during the practice of meditation/contemplation. It is, traditionally, regarded as the "seat" of Awareness, that is, as the principal portal to the nonlocal transcendental Self (*ātman*).

13. Sensory inhibition is an important phase in the yogic process of introversion, as characteristically pursued in the so-called "verticalist" schools, which attempt an ascent of consciousness in the contemplative state (meditation and ecstasy). As we uncouple our attention from the external world—that is, by disengaging our senses from their assigned task of giving us feedback about the outside reality—we can become increasingly mindful of our thoughts and emotions. In this way, we can discover through first-hand experience that our true nature (i.e., the *purusha*) exists beyond all our mental commotion. Thus, sensory inhibition indirectly serves the event of liberation, as do all other yogic practices, including the moral disciplines and even *āsana.* Judging from Patanjali's portrayal of his (verticalist) eight-limbed path, he would have considered *pratyāhāra* an absolute prerequisite of liberation. But from a more integral perspective, liberation does not dependent on whether or not we experience thoughts or sense perceptions.In fact, the ideal of living liberation (*jīvan-mukti*) assumes that liberation is the same regardless of what occurs in the mind. Indeed, the *Ashtāvakra-Samhitā* (1.15), a beautiful didactic text of Vedānta, teaches that clinging to even the state of ecstasy (*samādhi*), which depends on complete *pratyāhāra,* is an obstacle to liberation. The *Tripura-Rahasya,* another Vedānta work (which was a favorite of Ramana Maharshi), endorses this position. It is perfectly feasible to attain liberation in the waking state, without the intermediary development of meditation and *samādhi* states.

14. The term *purusha-jnāna* is something of a misnomer. We can know *about* Spirit (through the testimony of great realized adepts or through inference), but we can never *know* Spirit (the ultimate "knower") itself. One could say that *purusha-jnāna* is a concession to the ordinary mind. In the *Yoga-Sūtra* (3.35), this concept is associated with the high-level ecstatic realization of *nirvicāra-vaishāradya,* where the discernment between Spirit and Cosmos is so refined that the mind catches a glimpse of the absolute transcendence and purity of the *purusha* and thus is powerfully moved forward (or upward) into the supraconscious ecstasy (*asamprajnāta-samādhi*).

Questionnaire 14 (to be submitted to TYS)

Questionnaire 15

1. (d)
2. (c)
3. (b)
4. (d)
5. (a)
6. (b)
7. (a), (c), and (e)
8. (b), (f), (j), (l), and (n)

Questionnaire 16

1. (c)

2. (d)

3. (a)

4. (b) and (c); (a) means "face," (d) means "knife," and (e) means "death wish"

5. (a), (c), (d), and (e)

6. (a) and (b)

7. (c) and (f); (a) applies only to ecstasy, and in *videha-mukti* the *vrittis* are not merely suspended but completely eradicated due to the absence of a body-mind; (d) and (e) characterize *nirvicāra-vaishāradya*; (g) applies because upon disembodied liberation only the adept's psychophysical microcosm is dissolved. (f) is correct, because in Patanjali's Yoga, liberation does not obliterate *prakriti* as such.

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